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Out of the Red Inferno;

Or, BERNICE WILSON'S SIN

By Elizabeth Mason

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JUST seems 'sif a hunk o' johnny-cake 'ud hit the spot," insisted Luke Wilson. His serenely patient brown eyes followed his wife's movements as he lay on the sittingroom couch.

"'Tain't no use," his wife objected. "You ain't et so much as 'ud stuff an egg ever sence you been sick; 'tain't likely as you'll feel fit to stow down hoe-cake. Besides, the meal's most out—ain't a sifter o' it left."

"Anyway, Melia, you bake me some," Luke persisted. He was neither hurt nor astonished at his wife's negative attitude on the subject of hot corn bread. Immediate compliance on her part would have created in his mind a sense of uneasiness. Ever since his arduous courtship many years before, he had learned to gain Amelia's compliance by the process of a steady siege. Persistent reiteration had won him his wife; persistent reiteration had, ever since, been essential to securing her consent to any proposition whatever.

"I'll git you a sack o' meal when that's gone," he urged. "There's plenty more where it come from."

"An' it takes money to buy it," Mrs. Wilson darkly hinted but she rose heavily from her rocker and withdrew to the adjoining kitchen. Here her step sounded dully as she moved back and forth over the deeply worn hemlock floor. A light knock summoned her to the back door, which she unlatched and threw wide open.

"How'd you do, Mis' Sheldon," she greeted the tall, gaunt middle-aged caller. "Take that arm chair; and let me take your things. In a hurry? Well, set and chat a minute anyway. "Luke's 'bout the same—neither better nor worse," she told her visitor. "It's a touch o' ager, I reckon. He's just sick enough to be notional; has his mind set on corn pone." Whereupon Luke's wife unburdened her mind concerning notional invalids while she broke eggs into a bowl and collected other desired ingredients.

Mrs. Sheldon listened with her thin lips set in a sympathetic smirk. Her somewhat Roman nose and high white forehead gave the lady an air of intelligence. Her gray eyes, framed in an excess of white, showed eager interest. Mrs. Sheldon's greed for neighborhood news was well known to be inordinate. Her methods for securing it were decidedly of the can-opener and gimlet order. She delighted in unearthing family skeletons and many homes welcomed her because of her choice collection.

"Sam Bartlett's wife ain't back yet from N' York," she confided to her listener. "She's been gone now the hull o' seven weeks an' that poor man cooking himself," she stated ambiguously. "An' I say an' have said all along that she ain't a-coming back; I say she's up an' left. I just dropped in to see if you need any one to set up nights," she informed Mrs. Wilson as she rose to go. "But I 'spose that with Bernice to help nurse an' Nora an' Zoe to do the work, you're well fixed."

"I reckon I'll get along," Mrs. Wilson informed her drily. "Yes, the girls is all I need. Goodby."

"I wonder what Mis' Sheldon was nosing 'round here for," Luke's wife mused apprehensively. "When Sarah Sheldon's out news-gathering some one's got to provide. But, thank goodness," she concluded as she awkwardly stooped to thrust the corn batter in the oven, "me an' mine ain't the ones to contribute."

As she added fresh wood and stirred the fire to insure quick results the door again opened to admit Nora. The girl deposited a pail of late-ripening blackberries on the kitchen table, then threw her slim, briar-torn length in the chair just vacated.

"There's over seven quarts," she declared. "Mis' Lewis at the hotel wants five; that leaves enough for pies and some for dinner."

Presently the other two members of the family appeared with their hands stained by contact with the soil. Zoe, being fair skinned and fat, contrasted sharply with the grime; but Bernice because of her rich brunette coloring, her arched lips of vivid red, her wealth of dark clustering hair and soft brown eyes was beautiful despite her work-day dress and tumbled locks. She was at the alluring age when thoughtless girlhood merges into the glory and pain of womanhood. Even then the vision-seeing brown eyes were darkened by troubled thought, the corners of the sweet mouth drooped. With her woman's strength she had attempted a man's task—and failed. With Zoe's childish aid she had tried to assume her beloved father's burdens. In the fields awaited the neglected harvest, but her strength was unequal to the demand.

After the noon meal Zoe and Nora started out with pails for an additional supply of wild berries but Bernice lingered at the kitchen door.

"Mother," she said reluctantly turning back. "It's no use; we can't do this work. For father's sake I'd finish if I could, but we must find some other way. We must!"

"What would you propose?" demanded Mrs. Wilson with nerves on edge from night care in the sickroom and unaccustomed worry. "You know a man can't be hired this time o' year. We've offered cash an' we've offered shares, but every man an' boy's working double to get in their own crops. What you going to do 'bout it?"

The girl's dark eyelashes swept her crimsoned cheeks. Her head bowed in fear and shame. From her whitened lips came low-toned faltering words. "I'd—I'd send—for—Jud," she said.

The elder woman's angry gaze noted the shrinking form, heard and understood the note of appeal in her stepdaughter's half breathed sentence. Luke's dainty, girlish first wife, who had usurped her own final province but one brief year, seemed to stand in the flesh before her. She had reluctantly entered Luke's home as a successor to another woman. Even more reluctantly she had assumed the care of his child, but having assumed it she painstakingly performed her duty. Then as time passed nature played a scurvy trick. The toddling child grew into the exact form with the identical temperament of the dead mother. Mrs. Wilson noted the father's marked affection for this child and despite her practical, phlegmatic qualities experienced a varying degree of jealousy.

"Send for Jud," the elder repeated. Her tone expressed irony, reproach, astonishment. "That upstart! That ingrate! The lad who deserted us after he'd been fed and clothed and schooled! The young scoundrel, who set my will at naught, who defied me to my face!"

Incoherent and breathless she paused. Even blinded by wrath she saw her stepdaughter's pretty face harden to stern lines, the jaws set to unused firmness, then the brown eyes lifted.

"You drove him to it," Bernice declared. "It wasn't right to treat him as if he was outcast—scum! His only fault was poverty, the poverty of a friendless orphan. But he earned his way; he worked for us faithful as a dog. He grew to be father's right hand; he neglected his own welfare; he asked for no favor, except——"

Bernice ceased speaking. To the mass of her dark hair swept the crimson flood, but the tender mouth was still firm, unyielding, hard-set to finish the thing she had to say.

"Except to marry into our family," taunted the angry woman. "He dared to ask for our daughter—the daughter we was educating for something worth while. He dared to court you in secret when I forbid you to meet. He dared to tell me he'd come back for you when I turned him from the door! And after that insolence you tell me to send for Jud! I believe you'd marry him in spite of me. You'd lose your chance to make something of yourself and disgrace us by marrying the penniless son of old Nick Bradley. Mind this," she burst out, "Jud Bradley shall never enter this door. Never!"

The girl's downcast face whitened to

the hue of death. Her slim hands locked in convulsive clasp.

"He must," she managed to articulate. "Do you understand? He must! He and I have sinned!"

Luke's wife stood in the doorway transfixed with horror. Before her stood the shrinking, erring child of that other woman who was bringing bitter shame to her household, but the thoughts and emotions her brain were not of the lovers driven to sin by her imperious mandate. Instead there obtruded the hooked nose and inquisitive face of Mrs. Sheldon.

"So this," she thought, "is what Sarah Sheldon is ferreting out! She suspects the truth, the serpent, the vulture!" The idea maddened her. Pride for the girl was burned from her heart. Uncontrollable wrath urged her to vent her own distress in cruel denunciation. Back of all rankled the fact that her will was defied. Human love had swept aside human edict. She had wrought disaster. Within her heart she knew that in time she would have relented. There was no tangible objection to the union save poverty and the youthfulness of the couple.

"Go," she commanded, wrought to a pitch of unreasoning wrath. "Go to your lover! You'll be one less to feed. Go!"

Her usually florid countenance was pale with anger. Later she might modify her speech, but now she wished to punish, to signally mark her displeasure. Abruptly she turned in her white rage and closed the door in the girl's shame-stricken face.

Dazed, despairing, uncertain what move to make in this soul-crisis, Bernice sought a side door that led up a stairway to the haven of her small bedroom. She felt, at the moment, forsaken of God and man. She could not disturb the invalid father and her benumbed brain failed to realize that her mother's revilement was but the crest of the storm. There seemed nothing in the world left to her but Jud—or death. Over and over her dulled intellect reiterated the command: "Go to your lover." As she pondered she became possessed of a dementia—the craze to find Jud and learn her fate. Had he changed? Was he still true? Doubting God she likewise lost her trust in man. But she would find the lover who had been driven from her; she would know whether her destiny would end in marriage or the other—that which she dared not give a name.

Back in the east forests at Stewart's lumbering camp Jud had found employment. Then had occurred at rare intervals clandestine meetings. While the father had not actively opposed, neither had he sanctioned the young people's early union. Therefore the lovers agreed to see each other no more until both parents' consent sanctified their marriage. There was an hour of clinging love then the agonizing parting. Two months had slipped slowly by. Her timid letter remained unanswered. Now she must see him. Stewart's mill was miles back in the timbered region but distance could be annihilated. Dry-eyed, tense-lipped she deftly prepared for departure. Her soiled gown was replaced by the neat, brown alpaca—her best. Her childishly braided hair was tied back with dark red ribbon. Every detail of her toilet received minutest care—the attentive regard bestowed on the dressing of the dead.

When she at last emerged at the side door that led to the eastern highway she seemed a bit of vivid autumn. Swiftly she merged into the russet and gold of the decaying forest; swiftly she passed under the wood's avenue of outspreading trees—herself an etch of russet with a dash of cardinal.

Footsore, heartsick, half-dazed Bernice plodded on past strange farms and wood scenes while her stepmother's anger expended itself in an energetic onslaught on accumulated fruit canning. She supposed Bernice to be still in her room. She believed a spell of "thinking it over" exceptionally good medicine. After a time she'd grudgingly take action in Bernice's favor, but first the girl must suffer. So she ladled hot pears into cans, refraining from talk with Luke. Even in the midst of her anger she controlled the impulse to berate to him the misdeeds of his favorite child. Out on the far highway Bernice dragged her feet through stretches of sand and over wooded hills. At a river that wound under low cedars she bathed her perspiring face and drank deeply of the brackish water. Beyond this extended some miles of swamp penetrated by a road of corduroy. Unbroken silence reigned in that twilight of crowding spruce. Wild creatures seemed to have deserted the darkening jungle. Hitherto she had shrank from meeting pedestrians, but now she craved human presence. Starless darkness soon enveloped her but she stumbled on. Beyond the marsh was Stewart's mill—and Jud.

Presently the one uncouth street of the lumbering village lay before her. Dim lights shone from small-paned windows. At the right, uprose in shadowy outline the great mill, that throbbed and sung by day with the vibrant scream of whirling saws. Nearby was the boarding house with many dimly lighted windows. Here she would find the one she sought. Tremblingly she knocked at the cookroom door. When she passed the dingy window she had seen a woman's form busied at a dish-piled sink, but no one answered the summons. Again she applied for admittance and this time the battered door opened a hand's breadth framing the grinning face of a boy.

"I bane trow hot suds if y' don't quit. I won't stand for no more dat funny business. You hear, Hod Brinkman? Oh!" she ejaculated, catching sight of Bernice, "I ain't telling you dat. I t'ou't it was de boys."

"I wish," faltered the girl, "to speak to Jud Bradley."

"He bane gone," the lad informed her. "Jud, he hoofed it to Saginaw last mont' for to get big wages top-loading in a big camp."

"What camp?"

"Jud, he don't say. Dere bane a power o' camps long up river an' I couldn't tell which."

Silently the girl slipped back into the enfolding night. Like a shadowy wraith she fled through the remaining village and on into the farther forest. For the hour she was crazed with the horror of her situation, then came the blessed paralysis of the mind that deadens mental anguish. In a leaf-strewn hollow, couched and covered by sweet-scented, down-fallen foliage, she slept—slept the dreamless sleep of utter exhaustion. With the morning light came back, many-fold, the determination to find Jud. Return without him was impossible. The idea had become as obsession—she must find Jud.

Clustering blackberries provided a poor substitute for food. With these for nourishment she wandered all day in an unreal world. Almost she doubted her own identity. That night her bed was of soft pine needles; the next was spent beneath an upturned boat. With senses dulled she plodded on persistently hoping to find the one she sought among the great lumbering camps on the Saginaw. Her quest was handicapped by excessive shyness. Human approach sent her into hiding like a startled fawn. At cookhouse doors she asked her stereotyped query and received the same disheartening reply. The fourth day dawned gloomily beneath a gray pall that was deeper than the blue haze of October. After a time the air became acrid with drifting smoke.

"Farmers clearing land," she thought. But when she entered the next clearing she saw no fires, yet the smoke became momentarily more dense. At a roadside orchard she gathered fallen apples and ate them as she continued on her way. Again she threaded the cordurov of a swamp. Its dense, heaven-excluding foliage filtered the smoke-laden air, but on the far side acrid, stinging smoke forced her to bathe her eyes in roadside pools of marsh water. The country now stretched before her, dewless and parched with drouth. Thick gray atmosphere shrouded the woods until trees seemed specters and all forms unreal. Frightened, she hurried along the highway that paralleled the river, thinking to find shelter. Suddenly out of the impalpable curtain burst a figure that urged a panting horse. Then, like a set piece in a representation of inferno, she saw a galloping team and wagon with women and children, low-huddled. Almost instantly others came toward her—men running—and one, catching a dim outline of the girl's form, called frantic warning.

"To the river!" he shouted. "To the river! The fire's behind!"

Bernice, heeding the mandate, turned toward the broad stream she knew flowed at her left. Over tinder-dry brush she scrambled to the water's edge. She was not a moment too soon. Down the margin of the stream she caught full view of the oncoming fire. Like scarlet banners flung aloft the flames came racing through the resinous tree tops. With inconceivable speed the scarlet wave flashed from dry cedar to dry pine, filling the air with a dull continuous roar that is like nothing else on earth.

With a gasp Bernice threw herself in the turbid stream and there clung, terrified, to a sunken snag. Instantly the curling, leaping, seething flames filled the air above her almost submerged head. Heat, stifling, intolerable held space in deadly grip. Dead pines became red pillars of fire; giant cedars became cardinal sheets of flame. For an eternity the world seemed one vast mass of consuming heat. Later the fury of flames gave place to glowing coals and volumes of smoke. For Bernice the immediate danger was past, but along the region she had traveled the fire roared through fresh timber.

Thankful for present safety, the girl dragged her stiffened limbs from the river and set about drying her saturated clothing. Weakened by exposure, grief and lack of food, Bernice fell to weeping. Choking sobs shook her slender form. She had before wept during her dismal pilgrimage, but now she gave herself utterly to despair. Mechanically she rearranged her quickly dried garments, braided her hair to a nicety of compactness and started back in the main road. It was impassable! The way was blocked by smouldering fire. At the river bank she again sank down in hopeless, helpless misery and relinquished herself to the abandonment of grief.

"For God's sake," exclaimed the voice of a man, "stop crying and think of them as needs help!"

Startled, Bernice lifted her tear-stained face to view the speaker. Directly before her in a rude boat sat one with hands and face blackened as if he had prepared for a part in a minstrel show. His hair was scorched to his temples; the whites of his blue eyes shone grotesquely from his smudged face; his clothing was reduced to rags.

"Doc McKay's working like a fiend," he declared. "Needs a woman to help; told me to git one if I had to go to the fire limit. Looks just like you was waiting sort of providential. Git in."

"How'd you save the boat?" was Bernice's somewhat irrevelant remark, as she dazedly clambered into a rear seat.

"Sunk it," explained the recent fire-fighter. "Put stun in the bottom till she was under the river."

"Who's hurt?" next queried Bernice, as the doctor's call for assistance percolated her numbed senses.

"Boyle's mill crew—such of 'em as ain't dead—and farmers what stayed too long trying to save stock," the man told her while he carefully picked his way among river snags. "Boyle, he wanted to save the mill so we fit by back firing. But when them cedars and jack pine began to roar up the river I knew it wan't no use. Time-by the flames come 'long and licked up every board. Some of the boys got caught an' never was seen no more, an' some of 'em's half dead. Then the settlers come running outen the brush like rabbits, an' Doc, he's patching up the hull caboodle."

Horrified, Bernice listened while the grim boatman guided his craft through the enveloping haze. Had she been versed in the lore of myths he might have seemed to her like Charon, the dread navigator of the underworld. The smoke-shrouded stream with its ramparts of charred ruins might have recalled the river Styx. Their journey into that red Inferno of death and desolation was easily suggestive of that other bourne.

"Any of your folks git burned?" the man queried with friendly interest. His perception of the horror was dulled; so great had been the magnitude of the holocaust that ordinary sensibilities were deadened.

"No," said Bernice, "not unless——"

In that moment an awful fear palsied her heart. Was Jud—the one she had come far to seek—a victim of the fire's ravages? She dared not voice her usual query. Courage had reached its lowest ebb. Crouching in her seat she watched the acrid haze eddy above the water. Sometimes as a tree fell it was heard aloud; sometimes it lifted as if forced upward by cooler air at the surface of the river. Gazing she saw all yet nothing. Her aching heart and brain only conned over and over the frightful possibility. After what seemed eternity the grimy oarsman rowed to the right bank of the stream and shoved his boat on land.

"Here we be," he announced. "An' Doc, he's over there in that field with the wounded. Come on."

Over the blackened turf, under the pall of smoke, they walked to the spot where Dr. McKay was giving first aid to the fire victims. Two or three begrimed and bandaged men assisted him in his ministrations. One of these was a young man whose left arm and hand were rudely bandaged. His handsome, open countenance was smoke-blackened; his fair close waving hair was darkened by smoke and grime; his clothing showed the effect of a day and night's contention with the crimson fiend that had swept across the flats of Saginaw. Bernice gazed at this man as if she saw a ghost. Her face grew ashen then flamed to sunlight.

"Jud," she called in glad amazement. "Jud!"

Instantly he wheeled toward the sound of her voice. His blue eyes expressed intense wonder, joy, love.

"Bernice, my darling! You?" he exclaimed and caught her swaying form.

At sunset the last evening of that eventful week a livery team stopped at Luke Wilson's gate. From the carriage descended a powerfully built, level-gazing young man and a slender, well-clad girl. Together they advanced to the door where Luke's wife, with smiling face, stood waiting.

"Mother," the girl said with brown eyes raised in shy, sweet supplication, "this is my husband. Forgive me; I've brought back Jud."

But Mrs. Wilson's anger had long since burned to ashes as had the flames of Saginaw. Her countenance expressed immense relief; her grasp gave hearty welcome.

"Father?" next queried Bernice, not waiting for words that are sorely difficult of expression. "How is father?"

"Your pa's fur from well," stated Mrs. Wilson in tones of undoubted reconciliation, "but he might be worse. And what's more," she declared matter-of-factly, "he ain't got 'round to fetch another sack o' meal. I'm clean out."

The end.

Alexander Got Even.

"Down in the Southern States," the advance agent said, "where some of the cities have as much negro population as they have white, it is a rule to reserve about two sections of the balcony for the colored gentry. These seats always are reserved; they are known as 'colored seats' and never are sold to white persons.

"I was playing down that way a few weeks ago, and it was in Shreveport, La., that an odd incident occurred. A musical attraction, appealing strongly to negro taste, was billed for a single performance. All the swell negroes in town were going to that show. On the day the advance sale opened the first man in line was a negro, well known to the box office man.

"'How many seats reserved for cullud folks?' the negro said.

"'More than you care to buy,' the box office man said.

"'You dunno what I wants to buy. How many seats reserved for cullud folks?'

"'Well, I've got two sections reserved. In those two sections are 105 seats.'

"'How much for the 105 seats?'

"'Let's see. Fifty seats at $1 and fifty-five seats at 75 cents. That will be $111.25.'

"'Give 'em to me,' the negro said at the same time exposing a large bank roll.

"'Look here, Alexander, are you going to speculate with these tickets?'

"'I dunno what you mean by spekulatein' with those tickets. I wants to buy all the tickets you have for colored people.'

"'You going to have a party at this show?'

"'No, suh; I'se going all by myself.'

"'What are you going to do with the rest of the tickets?'

"'Nuthin'. I'm just goin' to keep some one away, that's all. They ain't no nigger goin' to see that show but me.'

"The box office man began to suspect a deep laid plot. He quizzed the negro. 'Alexander, you've got something up your sleeve,' he said. 'What's the rag?'

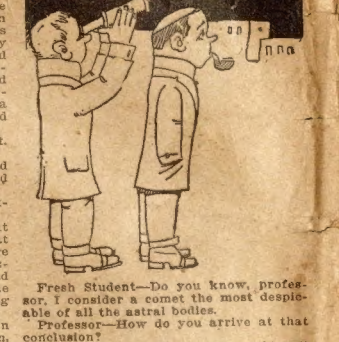
"'I'll tell you,' Alexander said. 'I stuck on three different gals in town and I axed every one of 'em to go with me to this show. Every one of 'em refused, saying sarcastic like that they already had been dated ahead. I wants to monopolize the tickets, that's all. I'll show those cullud pussons they can't fool with me. They can't go after I get all those tickets, and I got the money to buy 'em with, too.'

"The box office man consulted with a representative of the show. 'Sure, Mike,' the representative said. 'Sell him the whole shebang. We'll have the money.'

"So the tickets were handed forth and Alexander delivered in turn $111.25.

"Alexander made good. He used only one of the 105 seats reserved for him, but he had 104 tickets stowed away where no one could get them."

"I understand," the advance man concluded, "that there was quite a large delegation waiting for Alexander after the show. I don't know what happened to him."



Fresh Student—Do you know, professor, I consider a comet the most despicable of all the astral bodies.

Professor—How do you arrive at that conclusion?

Fresh Student—They are such tail bearers, you know.

Young Man's Tact.

The man who was having his picture taken in a photograph gallery was an innocent listener to this conversation between two young ladies on the other side of the screen:

"You know, Kate, I sometimes wear a long curl hanging down the back of my neck?"

"Yes."

"Well, when Phil was calling on me the other evening, he asked me if he might have that curl, and I jokingly said yes. Before I knew what he was about, he had taken a little pair of scissors out of his pocket and clipped it off, close to my head."

"Why, the idea! Didn't that make you furious?"

"Not for the smallest fraction of a second. I thought it was splendid of him that he didn't seize it and pull it off."

Madeline Dare's Vengeance;

Or, THE UNWRITTEN LAW

By Weldon J. Cobb

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CHAPTER VI.

THE REVEREND THURSTON.

CYRIL DARE left the old deserted mansion on wings of fleetness, like a man in some wild, unreal dream. Eyes, face, energy, soul were on fire with what seemed to be to him the acme of human felicity.

He was a man under the spell of the impulse of a new excitement and absorbing train of circumstances. Not a feather's weight at that moment did the misery or grief or lessons of the past depress or warn him. His long imprisonment, the pathetic death of his sister, the loyal devotion of the magnificent woman whom he had just left, all merged into the one great circumstance of the moment, that he was free, rich, happy.

Life seemed radiant, the future golden. Amid his prison solitude he would have welcomed liberty as a bare beggar welcomes the greatest boon in life. He had often dreamed of escape. How he would have welcomed and treasured it, even as a hunted fugitive! Cold, hunger, deprivation would have seemed as nothing—only to be free from the hideous prison life. And now—!

In the excess of his wild emotion he could have shouted out aloud. He felt like dancing gaily along the dark, silent road; sirens of delight appeared to smile and beckon him; a pathway of gold seemed open to him.

Oh, this is new life, indeed—living, at last! All the grim blackness of the past was worth enduring for this supreme moment of contentment, he told himself.

His whole frame warmed as he glanced down at the neat, elegant attire that he wore. He thrilled with joy as his hand crossed over the small fortune in his pocket. His heart seemed at rest as he thought of the lonely girl who had lifted him over the threshold of a prison to place him amid the safety and luxury of a palace.

Cyril Dare rather commended himself for the generous impulse that had caused him to ask Madeline Rossiter to become his wife. He did not pause to consider the rashness of the sudden decision. It was of a piece with all his reckless procedure. Was the impelling cause gratitude? Was it because of the thought that she was the friend of his sister? Was it because, flattered by her devotion, he recognized in her a helpmate easy to guide and control? His soul thirsted for pleasure and companionship. This regal woman seemed to fill eye and heart with interest. As to love—he could not precisely tell. The joy of the hour was so great that he simply regarded a marriage to Madeline as a fitting climax to an unusual situation. He believed she loved him, and that flattered his vanity.

Dare did not experience the least fear of recognition. The prison he had so recently left and dread of pursuit were farthest from his thoughts. The transformation from the convict to the gentleman was complete, his disguise was perfect.

He reached the village and proceeded boldly and rapidly down its principal street. It was strange, but the first person he met was a town police official in uniform on his nightly round of duty.

"Ah, officer," spoke Dare familiarly, "can you direct me to a clergyman?"

"Why, certainly," assented the man, with a wondering stare at the stranger. "I will be obliged."

"Two streets south. You can see the church from here."

"Yes, I see it," nodded Dare, peering down the tree-lined thoroughfare.

"Just next to it is the parsonage—Rev. Thomas Little."

"Thank you, my man," said Dare, clapping the officer on the shoulder in a friendly way, and then extending a bank-note, carelessly separated from others in his pocket.

It was a reminder of the old careless spendthrift ways to dispense money in the lordly fashion of a liberal millionaire. Already the fever of prodigal living ran riot in the veins of the ex-convict. There was a careless yet pleasing swing to his form as he proceeded down the street.

When Dare rang at the house west of the church indicated by the officer, the summons brought a pretty, gentle-faced lady to the door.

"The Rev. Mr. Little?" inquired Dare, lifting his hat courteously.

"He is not at home, sir," responded the lady.

"But will be soon, I hope?" asked Dare in an urgent, anxious tone.

"I fear not. Mr. Little has gone to another town, and told me that if he was not here by dusk he might remain over night at his sister's home."

Dare looked blank and disappointed. He reflected for a moment. Then he observed.

"Then, some other clergyman in Bristol?"

"There is none," responded the minister's wife. "You must be a stranger here not to know that there is but one church. The union service was adopted about a year ago."

"I see, I see," murmured Dare, and turned reluctantly from the doorstep.

"Was it a matter of urgency?" inquired the lady in tones of kindly interest.

"Very much so, madam," replied Dare. "I wished to get married."

"Oh, dear!" fluttered the lady aroused to sympathy and interest. "I am very sorry that Mr. Little is absent."

"So am I," said Dare rather drily.

"By the way, though," said the lady. "It just occurred to me; there may be another clergyman in town, a visitor."

"I hope so," spoke Dare eagerly. "Where shall I find him?"

"I recall a gentleman coming here last evening," continued the minister's wife. "After he left my husband told me that he was enroute for some place in the west, and had stopped over here to await instructions from his synod. He belonged to some new church body. He called out of professional courtesy."

"His name?" asked the impatient Dare.

"It was the Rev. Mr. Thurston."

"And where will I find him?"

"He was stopping at the town hotel. You know, we have only one here. He may have gone on his journey—I do not know."

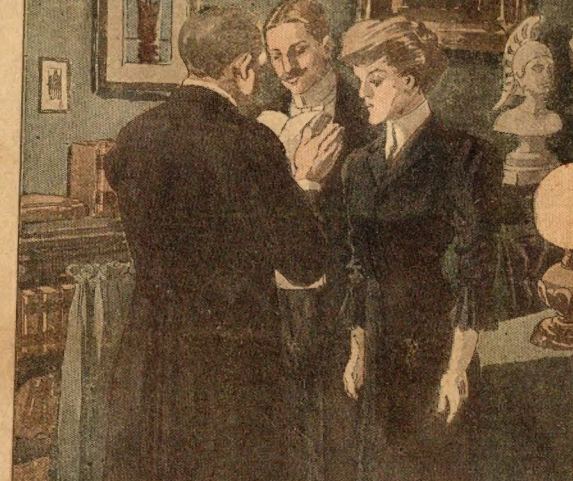
"Thank, thanks," uttered Dare fervently, and as fervently proceeded on his way. His impetuous spirit, though caged for a while, galled under restraint. He was soon at the hotel.

"Yes, sir," obsequiously bowed the proprietor of the hotel in response to a quick query from Dare. "Mr. Thurston is still here. He will remain here until morning, I think."

"Where will I find him?" inquired Dare.

"Second floor front—room A."

Dare was up the stairs without delay. He located room A. Its interior was lighted and its door slightly ajar. He made out the sole occupant of the apartment. He was a clean-shaven, bright-eyed man, neatly dressed in black, wearing a ministerial tie and collar, and singing in a subdued tone as though



As in a dream Madeline went through the wedding ceremony.

pared for the ministery. The recommendations were sent forward. I was even apportioned to my new parish in the West. I was halted here on telegram, however, to receive my full license to preach."

"I see," nodded Dare, but rather impatient at the tiresome explanation.

"That missive arrived an hour ago. It is my license, my commission to engage in the great work. It is so precious I have not yet even opened it. I am so happy, so blessed to realize that at last I can begin my great work for humanity, that I walk on air. My dear friend, what can I do for you?"

"I wish to marry a young lady."

"Ah, indeed!" smiled Mr. Thurston, with bright sparkling eyes. "Truly, a happy omen, a glad, welcome commencement to my new career. I am to accompany you—yes? I am at your service at once."

The Rev. Thurston moved actively about the apartment. Dare, immersed as he was in his thoughts and plans could not help but notice that the clergyman tenderly picked up the envelope. He reverently pressed it with his lips, and then bestowed it in an inner pocket as if it were some inestimable treasure.

He consulted a book which he selected from several on the table, glanced over its pages, and then taking up his hat said almost jubilantly, certainly with joy and pleasure in his tones:

"And now, come, my friend. As I told you, I am but just ordained for the ministerial functions. I may not be as adept in reading the lines as an older one in the service, but I will wed with a soul sympathetic for the heartbeats of all humanity."

Cyril Dare walked on, his hand touching gloatingly the small fortune in money, his legacy from a dead sister. The fingers of the little clergyman lovingly pressed the unopened envelope in his pocket. Had he but opened it then and there, for it was to prove a veritable Pandora's box which was to send forth mystery, misery and tragedy.

CHAPTER VII.

MAN AND WIFE.

The Rev. Mr. Thurston left the little country village, and swung along by the side of Cyril Dare still humming a happy tune. His high spirits had by this time somewhat infected his companion with his own excitement and joyousness.

"Just became a preacher, eh?" spoke the ex-convict. "That seems to be a great satisfaction to you."

"A glory," added the clergyman in a rhapsodic tone. "It has been the desire of my life for two years. Mark you, my friend, I was one of the lost. My life was wasted, wrecked. I was a slave to rum. And now—the change! All those dark clouds have passed away. I live with a heart welling over with gratitude, inspired with a motive to help all humanity. To aid in spreading to the world the light of love and peace. Oh, what a privilege—oh, what a glorious mission!"

Dare was only slightly impressed. His own selfish aims and desires were dominant in his mind. Still, for a flashing moment what was best in his nature responded to the lofty ideals of the man by his side. He, too, had just come from the depths. He stood on life's great divide, for good or evil the world was all before him. The gay, the vivid, the wild round of metropolitan dissipation lured him already. Then, as he thought of the fair devoted woman awaiting his return at the old deserted house, he wondered if a quiet life with Madeline far away from the madding crowd, might not be the best after all.

But the sirens of pleasure and excitement beckoned to him. He knew and heeded their sybilline influence. He could not dispel the lure of the bright lights, the gay crowds, the glare and glitter of the city. He would be kind and gentle to the peerless creature who had done so much for him, and true to the memory of the devoted sister who had sacrificed her life for him. But he would select the primrose path of pleasure. He had suffered unjustly in prison. The world must pay for that!

In the meantime, at the old mansion, Madeline Rossiter sat shrinking back in a luxurious arm chair, trying to analyze all that had occurred and what it might lead to.

In the wildest dream of the great denouement self-sacrifice had impelled her to attain, she had never thought of the present finale. The hour, suddenly, startlingly, had reached a climax that was a crisis in her life. She had the power to feel emotion and the strong will to suppress it, but in her present state of mind she was utterly adrift.

His wife! The die was cast. She had fallen into the arms of Cyril Dare unresistingly, like a storm-tossed dove to its home rest. She had assented to his proposition to become his wife. She did not deplore her rashness for her own sake. It would be her pride and choice to aid in guiding the erratic life of this man aright. But what of Dare himself? Had he acted upon a sense of gratitude? Would not his volatile restless nature feel keenly the restraint, when the first flush of sentiment, of admiration, was past?

"I will be true to him—I will give my life to make him happy, as his poor, dead sister would have him," said Madeline fervently.

She arose from the daze of the moment, her old practical self. This was why, when Dare reached the house with the clergyman, there was a light in the front hall, and one of the servants met them at the door and ushered Mr. Thurston into the lighted parlor.

Madeline stood with one arm crossed at her breast to still the wild-beating of her heart, as Dare entered the room where she stood. He cast a fond, bright glance upon her and extended both his hands. Blushing, but with a frank trustfulness that pleased him, she greeted this welcome.

"I have succeeded," he said. "The minister is here. You do not regret?"

"No, no," she murmured flutteringly.

"Forget what I have been," he whispered ardently. "Just us two, you and I—the world all against us. Let us be happy."

As in a dream Madeline went through the wedding ceremony. She was impressed by the earnest, eloquent little clergyman who united them in marriage. His bright, cheery tones and manner dispelled the profound gloom of the old-fashioned apartment. The two servants from the town were witnesses.

When he had concluded the service, the clergyman spoke kind and thrilling words of hope and advice to the newly wedded pair. There was such genuine joyous encouragement and friendliness in his words, that the eyes of the beautiful bride grew lovingly tender and humid. Even Dare was affected, and the

increased pressure of his hand grasping her own brought a charming smile to the face of Madeline.

She started as she affixed her signature to the marriage lines. She paled. Was it an error? Her husband had signed his own name clearly, boldly: "Barton Rivers."

"I shall recall this as one of the happiest hours of my life," said the Rev. Mr. Thurston. "All—all presages happiness for you two. Congenial, harmonious, with all the world before you, think often of the minister who begins a new, grand career of usefulness to his fellow man at the marriage altar."

He shook hands with the bride and smiled upon her in a respectful, brotherly way. He bade adieu to Dare with friendly words of encouragement.

Mr. Thurston walked briskly towards the village. As he reached its lights he glanced casually on the banknote that Dare had placed in his hand.

"Fifty dollars!" he exclaimed in profound surprise. "Well, it shall go to charity. It was most generous."

The fee was characteristic of the spendthrift. The clergyman reached his room at the hotel with a beaming face.

"Oh, I hope all this presages joy and success in my new career!"

Now he could open the precious envelope. His eyes could be gladdened with the lines that awarded to him the honor of being appointed a worthy guide and helper to his fellow men.

The Rev. Mr. Thurston drew the enclosure from the envelope. His face was glowing. Then, suddenly, eyes astart, a deadly, sickening pallor overcreeping his face, he fell back as if struck by a thunderbolt.

CHAPTER VIII.

TOO LATE.

Cyril Dare stood regarding his newly made bride in a transport of rapt admiration, as they found themselves alone in the room where the solemn words of the sacred marriage ceremony had just been pronounced.

"My wife!" he murmured softly, and she smiled proudly and her soul was satisfied. Then she caught the murmur of the voices of the two temporary servants in the hall beyond them, and was recalled to a sense of practical household duties.

"We must decide," she said.

"You mean?" he began.

"Whether we remain here or not. As I told you, all the arrangements are made to remain here for two weeks, or depart at once. I noticed," and she lifted her eyes anxiously to his, "that you signed your own name to the marriage document?"

"Yes," he nodded, "why not?"

"Was it not reckless? I thought we agreed that the old name should be dead, buried, forgotten, as a measure of precaution, safety."

He closed her lips with a kiss.

"My dear, thoughtful Madeline," he said gaily, recklessly, "who knows that name here? Who remembers it anywhere? It was shrouded, lost in a number designation three years ago."

"I fear the risk," sighed Madeline, perturbed. "Some one might come across it."

"Not in this quiet village."

"Why did you take the risk?"

"To protect you. I wished to be sure, my brave, good sweetheart, that this marriage was as binding as the law could make it. I feared wedding you under an assumed name."

Madeline thrilled at the disclosure. The thoughtfulness and courage indicated moved her greatly. She looked up into Dare's eyes with a new sense of trustfulness and devotion.

"But we will solve all that at once," went on Dare animatedly. "Let us leave this place."

"You mean tonight?"

"I mean now, at once."

"We can do that," said Madeline. "I can leave instructions with one of the servants to close up matters of business here. Yes, I believe you are wise to decide to go. We will lose ourselves so we cannot be traced. There is a train, the only one for the night, in less than an hour."

"We will take it," said Dare definitely. "I had planned out for you a safe retirement, if such were your desire," continued Madeline. "I know of a secluded yet interesting summer resort where you could remain for a month, or even longer. You could find rest and quiet."

"I have had plenty of that!" laughed Dare rather harshly, and the allusion jarred her sensibilities.

"There would be entertainment, too. You should give yourself time to grow naturally into your new personality."

"That's it, famous," assented Dare. "My wise sweetheart, stranger as you think best—you, who have so far arranged everything so admirably."

There was little packing to do. Madeline had her belongings all ready, for she had anticipated her departure from the old mansion that night. A neat suit case awaited Dare. It took Madeline only a few moments to arrange with the servants about notifying the landlord and closing up the house.

"We shall be very happy," declared Dare gaily, as arm in arm they proceeded down the dark country road in the direction of the village.

Madeline murmured some contented assent. She was in a kind of a dream. Now that the practical responsibilities of the old mansion were off her shoulders, she was like a straw in the stream of life, drifting aimlessly.

"What was that?" she inquired with a sudden start, as they neared the village. They had turned from the broad turnpike into a side street leading to the railroad depot. A rapid, rushing figure had dashed by them.

"Somebody anxious to reach home speedily, it appears," responded Dare lightly.

"Mr.—Cyril," Madeline scarcely knew how to address her husband, "I fancied the passerby resembled the clergyman."

"Who made you my happy wife?" interrupted Dare lightly. "Nonsense! What possible further business could he have at the old house? I think I hear the locomotive whistle in the distance. We had better hasten, dear."

If they had only known! That scurrying figure!—It was the Rev. Mr. Thurston, indeed!

He was dashing on at the top bent of his speed. He was wild-eyed, distracted, uttering madly incoherent ejaculations.

Before this man's terror-stricken eyes, in letters of fire there seemed to dance before his excited vision and dazzle, and stun, and crush him, the first words of the enclosure of the envelope.

He had read only those lines. The remainder was nothing to him, in the face of the dreadful disclosure contained in the words:

"We have decided, dear brother, to change our plans. Instead of going into active work in the West, as we at first considered, you will please report to our parish in the city, and remain there as a student until the synod again meets."

Then he was not a licensed clergyman! The envelope had held not his authority to preach, as he had fondly supposed!

If he had only read the remainder of the letter, what misery might have been spared for himself and others! But in his wild consternation he had allowed the half read document to fall to the floor, to be gathered up carelessly by some indifferent housemaid, and cast into the dust pile.

"Oh, I must reach them, warn them, advise them, urge them to be at once married over again!" quavered the oversensitive, conscientious clergyman in anguished tones, as he darted down the dark and lonely country road.

To his finely wrought mind he had committed unwittingly a great crime. Unless he could reach the new bridegroom and bride, he would have sent them out into the world unwed, their union unlegalized!

The servants were preparing to extinguish the lights in the old mansion, lock up the house and return to town, when the frantic clergyman, breathless and pale and reeking with perspiration, dashed up the steps.

"The people I married here an hour since?" he gasped.

"They are gone," spoke one of the servants.

"Gone? When—where?" demanded Mr. Thurston in a hoarse, lost tone, falling against a supporting post of the veranda, overcome.

"To the village."

"Where will I find them?"

"They are to take the first train south."

"Oh, may I reach them in time!" fervidly panted the poor clergyman.

Wild eyed, nearly exhausted, half an hour later the Rev. Thurston rushed into the little railroad depot at Bristol. The station agent was just closing up for the night.

"The south train!" gasped this wild eyed visitor.

"Gone."

"When?"

"Half an hour since."

With a hopeless groan the clergyman sank to a baggage truck, while the station agent eyed him in strange wonderment.

"What's the trouble?" inquired the latter.

"Two passengers?" panted Mr. Thurston incoherently.

"Yes—a gentleman and a lady. The woman was the girl who has been living up at the old house, west of the village."

"The same! the same!" cried Mr. Thurston eagerly. "I must stop them!"

"But they are gone, man."

"By telegraph, I beseech, I implore of you to aid me in saving two innocent lives from wreck and ruin!"

"Impossible," declared the station agent.

"Oh, do not say that!"

"I must say it," replied the station agent, but gently and pityingly, for he discerned that his earnest-faced suppliant was in a mental state bordering on distraction.

"Stop them by telegraph."

"The train has already reached the junction. Their tickets ran only that far. There they may have taken any one of three trains going to different destinations."

The eyes of the little clergyman seemed starting from his head. He uttered a wild, startling cry like that of some human being wounded to the soul. Turning, he ran frantically back in the direction of the hotel.

A poor wretched wreck of humanity, he faced the astonished landlord.

"Lost! doomed!" he shrieked, reeled round and round, and fell to the floor a senseless heap.

Instantly the place was the scene of a vivid commotion. The servants were summoned, and, at the direction of the landlord, removed the insensible man to a little room back of the hotel office.

"Let him remain here," advised the hotel keeper gravely. "I will watch him through the night."

In about an hour the unconscious man started up with a wild shriek and then began to babble incoherently.

The landlord of the hostelry hurried and brought a bottle of strong liquor and a glass. He pressed a great draught to the lips of the sufferer.

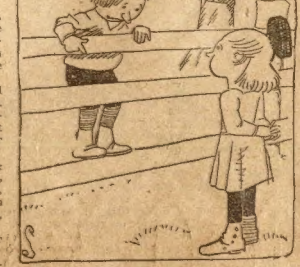
"Drink," he ordered, "you must quiet down, my dear sir—drink!"

"More!" screamed his distracted guest. "Yes, that is it. Rum! molten fire! anything to drown my awful suffering, my remorse. Oh, I am lost! doomed! accursed!"

So, all through the night the well meaning but anxious landlord fed to new demoniac life the flames that had slumbered for years. He was troubled over the condition of his guest, and knew no better panacea for his frantic condition.

Sadly, sadly dawned the new day. The sun arose and illuminated the haggard, contracted face of the poor clergyman, wandering in maudlin delirium. It shone on no sadder sight than that wreck of a noble mind, gone down to gloom and despair under the influence of a terrible error!

This dramatic story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. A lot of strange and exciting things happen. Read it. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a year's subscription. It only costs $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.



Bub—I bet I kin beat you makin' faces.
Bessie—Ah, gee! Look at the start you got, naturally!

Wanted Politics.

The daily newspaper is a necessity with most of us. A certain laundress has had a good substitute thrown in her way, but found it inadequate. A writer imports the tale of her relations with a noted writer on one of the Parisian dailies. The writer, it seems, has a strong objection to the notebook so dear to his associates.

He wears large white cuffs and on these he jots down such events as interest him, with suggestions for his subsequent articles. At first his laundress was much puzzled by these hieroglyphics, but as time went on she became able to read them, and apparently derived much benefit and pleasure from them.

One day the young man received with his laundered garments a slip of paper on which was written:

"Your last washing was very interesting, but we would be glad to have you give us more political news."

Growing Umbrella Handles.

At Maule, a small village near Paris, is carried on a singular industry which is little known. It is a nursery for the cultivation of trees suitable for use as umbrella handles, walking sticks and alpenstocks.

Nearly 500 acres of ground are given over to ash, oak, chestnut and maple saplings. One year after planting these are cut off near the root so as to make them grow several branches, which are then kept free from secondary stems.

The most curious part of the industry comes the following year. Incisions are made in the bark, thus engraving upon it various designs. When the bark is stripped these designs are found traced on the wood. At the end of the third year the branches are cut, stripped of their bark, bent into various shapes and sent to the manufacturers. Certain forms of handles are shaped while the branches are still growing.

EARTH IS ENOUGH.

We men of earth have here the stuff
Of paradise—we have enough!
We need no other thing to build
The stairs into the unfulfilled—
No other ivory for the doors—
No other marble for the floors—
No other cedar for the beam
And dome of man's immortal dream.

Here on the paths of every day—
Here on the common human way
Is all the stuff the gods would take
To build a heaven, to mold and make
New Edens. Ours the stuff sublime
To build eternity in time!
—Edwin Markham in Nautilus.

Falling From Great Height.

A German scientist, Prof. Albert Heim, who fell over a precipice in the Alps, but lived to tell the tale, makes that story a very encouraging account to those with an inclination to high jumps and the like.

His fall was only 70 feet, yet that would be more than enough to satisfy a temperate person. He has narrated his sensations in minute detail.

At first he seemed to himself to be flying through the air. His fall really could have occupied only a few seconds, but his train of thought was long and full of interesting detail.

"I clearly saw," he says, "the possibility of my fate. I said to myself, 'The rocky wall from which I am now being hurled prevents my seeing what is at its base. The snow may be melted there, or there may be none; if there is any my life may be saved. Otherwise death is inevitable.

"'If I am conscious of reaching the earth I have by me a bottle of aromatics and my alpenstock. I will still grasp it, for it may serve me in good stead.' I thought, too, of removing my eyeglasses, lest their splintering might cause injury.

"Other and greater thoughts for those I was to leave behind came upon me. For myself I felt indifferent, caring really little or not; but f. r motives of consideration for others I felt impelled, as it were, to make light of the matter. I seemed to call aloud, 'I am not much hurt.'

"I recollected that in five days more I was to have delivered an inaugural discourse, and thought of the grief my death would have caused to those near and dear to me. Anon, lying, as it were, on the limit of a far distant horizon, appeared a distinct and diverse images and episodes in my past life. The whole mental picture stood out.

"All things seemed lovely and of good report. There were no misgivings, no anxieties, no sorrow, pain or terror.

"Gradually a heaven of glorious blue, flecked with crimson clouds of gossamer lightness, surrounded me. In them I was wafted to and fro, borne up free below, but painlessly and pleasantly, while a vast and moving snowfield seemed to accompany me.

"Then came a dull thud, which I heard very distinctly, but did not feel—and my fall was ended. At that instant a dark veil passed before me.

"I called aloud three or four times, 'I am not much hurt,' grasped my glasses, which lay near me, and touched my limbs to make sure they were not broken.

"Then I saw my companions slowly approaching. They told me a good half hour had elapsed after my fall before I spoke.

"I had lost consciousness, and that explains the dark veil. Later my power of thinking returned. I was conscious only so long as I was falling of the perception of beautiful images. At the moment of contact with earth they disappeared."

That Common Metal Pin.

The common, ordinary garden variety of pin has been quaintly and pointedly termed "the emblem of attachment," and it is a wonder to think that women ever lived without these attachments, for there is hardly an hour of the day when we do not have the need of pins, an exchange says. They hold many of our hats together and a woman has even been known to keep an obstreperous shoe button in place with their aid. The ordinary pin was first invented and brought into use about the beginning of the sixteenth century, though there were pins made of metal in their present form as early as 1543, and in that year an English statute was passed called "an act for the true making of pynnes," which limited their cost not to exceed 6 shillings and 8 pence a thousand.

Previous to pins they were made of boxwood, bone and silver, but only the rich, of course, could afford to buy these. The poorer classes having to use pins made them of common wood, like our skewers.

When pins first came into use they were a favorite New Year's gift. Men presented them to the girls of their acquaintance much as they do flowers in these days, or husbands gave their wives an equivalent in money, which was called "pin money," an expression which later grew to be known as the amount of money which a husband laid aside for his wife for her private expenses.

TRANCE, or DEATH
or A Doctor's Mystic Power
By ALVAH MILTON KERR.

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CHAPTER XXII.

I DID not easily find my way into the realm of sleep that night. When I closed my eyes the scenes of the hashish-house swam before me; the fountain spouting its rainbow waters, the flame-like colors climbing the ladders of glass, the revolving chandeliers, the shattered, scintillating rain of many-hued light, the fairy-like strains of music, the heavy perfume, the dream-demented people, Breslau tearing an imaginary object in fragments, all the beauteous, fantastic, swing medley of sights, sounds and smells.

Opening my eyes upon the darkness, I could still see the wonders of the place, repeated and re-repeated by walls of mirrors stretching away like a hundred rooms of magic. Here was Shirlaw standing by me, exquisitely dressed and smiling quietly; there sat the man staring at the fancied colony of luminous ants; yonder the little thin man warming his hands at the fountain; beyond him Breslau, a pale, haggard Samson, being led like a blind man, from the place.

The thing was haunting, dementing. I arose at last and sat by the window looking out into the warm, starlit night. My search seemed at an end. Clearly Breslau was the man referred to by my father as having such unusual power. Now he was as one dead! I had looked upon his ruin! Where was there help now? life again for that dear one sleeping in her chill house on the little hill four hundred miles eastward? And what was I? A wearer of Cain's brand! owner of a hashish-house! a lover without hope! a youth chasing a wandering will-o'-the-wisp! a creature sitting in the darkness muttering its agony!

In the morning when the woman who kept the apartments came for the second week's installment of rent, I engaged her in conversation. She seemed refined and had the air of a decayed gentlewoman. When I had given her the money, for which she returned me thanks and a gracious smile, I said:

"Pardon me, but have you been long here?"

"In zee city, M'sieu?"

"Yes."

"Much of my life, M'sieu."

"Do you remember to have ever met a Dr. Stanwood?"

"Ah, truly, M'sieu! A beautiful gentleman—exquisite! He once have the large suite across the passage. Oh, yes, more than once!"

"Thank you. There is another, a large man, a Mr. Breslau. Do you know him?"

"Yes, M'sieu, he used often to come when zee doctaire was here."

"Pardon me, but were these gentlemen—they were honorable men, of course?"

"Oh, very, M'sieu!"

"Thank you."

She courtesied and went out. I sat thinking. Would surprises never cease? My father used to occupy apartments across the passageway! And Breslau often came! What campaigns of refined lawlessness had been discussed and agreed upon there, I wondered. What trials of psychic force, perhaps, had been made in those rooms upon patients who came to see my father! Secrets buried, no doubt, in the unknown tongue employed in my father's diary!

I got up and went down upon the street and walked about, restless, unnerved, without purpose. As I loitered along, unconscious of the sounds and figures of the street, I suddenly stopped stock still. A face glanced before me that made my heart leap. It seemed the face of Marguerite, but it was set in the white-lined black bonnet of the Ursuline sisters. Below it the dainty form was clad as in a great veil of mourning, and around the waist clung a curious black chain, with a small cross and crucifix at the end of it.

I turned and watched the retreating figure for a moment, then followed. Presently the little sister was joined by a second, and together they boarded a car, which jingled away toward the east. I sprang upon the platform of the next car. Would the driver say to what part of the city the car ahead of us went? Yes, to a distant part of the town, now forgotten by me. I slipped a small coin into his hand. Two sisters of Mercy had boarded the car before us, I said; could he say if there was a church, hospital or convent out that way? Yes, there was the mortuary chapel of St. Roch. It was beyond the street of the Elysian Fields, on Washington avenue. It was in the cemetery, the Campo Santo of the Church of the Holy Trinity. People who were very devotional went there. Doubtless the sisters were going there.

The next day as I rambled aimlessly about, I saw the little sister and her companion enter the great gate of the Ursuline convent.

Since I first saw her I had thought of her many times. That, I knew, was because she had a face like Marguerite's. I could but question within myself if she were a sister or relative of the lonely girl waiting in the big house away there among the magnolias.

That evening Shirlaw called at my lodgings. In mood he seemed airy, debonair, yet was unfailingly courteous. Again I felt a strong inclination to confide my secrets to his keeping. I marked the same undertone of inquiry, of persuasive influence in his aid and conversation. Again I set my will against that seductive solicitude which one found so flattering and grateful in him.

During our conversation that evening, I spoke of Breslau, and the pity I felt that one so strong and gifted should have been defeated in life by mere pleasure. It seemed so childish, so weak.

"Oh, that is what it is all about," he said; "the excuse for living is pleasure, Mr. Stantree. Yet all ecstasies are ruinous. That is the strange and pitiful part of it. Breslau, in a way, is a philosopher. He is crowding the pleasures of a lifetime into a year or two. He will soon be ready to die, you see."

He ended laughingly. The speech and its substance might once have fallen from my father's lips. It was all very like him.

"Yet he suffers?" I asked.

"Intolerably."

"He is a pitiable fool."

"Certainly. I am very far from approving either the man or his philosophy."

"Mr. Shirlaw, you spoke of this man's power over others; his strange psychical influence. I take it that sort of thing is rare among men?"

"Very infrequent, Mr. Stantree. At least, that is my impression."

"Might I ask if you know of others possessing a similar gift?"

He reflected a moment. "Soul strength, or mental strength, which you will, expresses itself differently in individuals. I know a remarkable man—he has a school for the blind out on St. John road. I believe he would interest you. His gift, call it what you will, is very mysterious, but it is not as Breslau's. You might call upon him, when at leisure, since you seem something of a student of phases."

I saw that he had evaded my query, and felt intuitively that he did so purposely.

"Thank you," I said. "I think I should like to do so. How will I find him?"

"I will write you a note of introduction," he said. "Have you a bit of paper?"

We were sitting in the front room of the suite, and I passed through the open door into the rear of this room in which I slept. In a closet at the rear of this room rested my hand bag upon the floor. I brought the bag toward the light, and opening it, took out some writing paper. As I did so my father's diary fell out upon the carpet. I glanced up at Shirlaw. He was watching me, humming a soft tune as he did so, and tapping an accompaniment upon the plush arms of his chair with the ends of his delicate fingers. I dropped the book back in the bag, and after placing paper and envelopes before him upon a table, returned the bag to the closet. When I resumed my seat he was writing. After a little time he folded the note, placed it in an envelope, sealed it and wrote an address upon it.

"Well, I have made you an unreasonably extended visit, Mr. Stantree. It approaches midnight, the hour when graveyards yawn; with permission I will take my leave. Come soon and see me, Stantree. You have pleasant quarters here, very; but I hope you will find them tiresome occasionally, then I may expect you to come to mine. Good night."

"Thank you, Mr. Shirlaw. Good night."

When he had gone I turned to the table and took up the letter. The superscription read: "Professor Branford, School for the Blind, Eastline and St. John Roads."

Was this the man of the manuscript notes? His name began with B! Again, so eager is trouble to soothe itself, a kind of hope sprang up in my heart.

CHAPTER XXIII.

In the afternoon of the day following the night of Shirlaw's visit, I found my way, by horse car and foot, to the intersection of Eastline and St. John roads, three miles back from the great river in the direction of Lake Pontchartrain. Here a private school for the blind, an old-fashioned, rambling, vine-covered plantation house, stood in a park, just where the city began to fringe the swampy, open country.

With Shirlaw's letter in my hand I went in to see the master.

Children were playing upon the lawny spaces of the little park, active and joyous, though blind.

Young couples, also blind, were walking here and there among the trees, moving and talking with that softness and touch of pathos common to those who dwell forever in the dark.

I found the master seated by a desk at the inner end of the long room, a tiny blind girl upon his knee, evidently he was teaching her the alphabet from blocks with raised letters upon them. As we came down the carpeted aisle he seemed to listen an instant to our footsteps, then placing the child upon the floor and whispering something to her, he arose and stood waiting our approach. He was tall, loosely fashioned man, with shoulders slightly stooped, as if from bending down so much to the little ones, white hair falling about a splendid dome-shaped head, and the most wistful, tender, benignant face I have ever looked upon. Though his eyes were open I saw that they were sightless.

I did not know how to address him. I felt it an outrage to give him my false name, yet I was loath to tell the truth. "I came to see you, sir," I said, stumblingly; "I have a letter—a letter of introduction here, but——"

"If you please be seated?" he said, kindly, and himself sat down. "Now, if I might take the letter——" He held out his hand, and, wondering how it could possibly be of service to him unless I read it, I gave it into his keeping.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Stanwood. I am obliged to Mr. Shirlaw for sending you to me. He says in the note that you are lately from Punta Gorda. I remember having been there a long time ago." He shook my hand cordially.

From astonishment I was scarcely able to speak, but managed to stammer the pleasure I had in meeting him.

"You do not happen to have been in Tampa recently, Mr. Stanwood?" he asked with interest.

"I came through there some two or three weeks ago, on my way from the North," I replied. In my heart I was wondering far more at the manner of his coming at the matter of the letter than at the matter itself, though a thrill of apprehension fled through me as I saw that Shirlaw had doubtless set down my true name, either in error or because he was aware that I was Dr. Stanwood's son, and embraced this opportunity to apprise me of the compromising fact.

"Ah, yes—my daughter went there to visit a relative some time ago; I have not had a letter from her recently, "I heard him saying, musingly. He stroked his forehead softly with his long, slim hand a moment, while that waiting, pathetic look, so often seen on the faces of the blind, deepened in his countenance.

"I like your voice," he said, suddenly brightening; "you are young, are you not? May I put my hands upon your face? You know I see best by touch!"

Assenting, I leaned toward him. He touched his finger ends over my hair and features lightly and deftly. "You are fine looking," he said, with a smile. "You have a kind of Greek head, but your hair is brown and your eyes are gray, are they not?"

"Yes, sir, I think so."

I was silent a moment.

"I came," I said, "to ask your impression of certain phases of psychical influence. Mr. Shirlaw intimated that I would find you, perhaps, interested in that subject. I have observed already that you have a power of perception not usual with men?"

He smiled in a kind, forbearing way. "That is only in respect of perception, as you say. I have no other unusual gift that I am aware of. I seem to have the faculty of seeing, under certain circumstances, much as the somnambulist sees. However, I have, quite naturally, been able to look but little into hypnology."

"Then, Mr. Branford, you believe that some have power over others, to induce a certain helplessness of will in the one dominated?"

"Assuredly, Mr. Stanwood; the fact is as well established as other phenomena in nature."

"To what extent, in your opinion, may volition in others be affected by this power?"

"Absolutely supplanted by the will of the operator."

"In such a case the dominating mind might fix a delusion in the mind of the weaker intellect?"

"Assuredly. That is common phe-

(Continued on page six.)

MENTAL ACCURACY

Greatly Improved by Leaving Off Coffee

The manager of an extensive creamery in Wis. states that while a regular coffee drinker, he found it injurious to his health and a hindrance to the performance of his business duties.

"It impaired my digestion, gave me a distressing sense of fullness in the region of the stomach, causing a most painful and disquieting palpitation of the heart, and what is worse, it muddled my mental faculties so as to seriously injure my business efficiency.

"I finally concluded that something would have to be done. I quit the use of coffee, short off, and began to drink Postum. The cook didn't make it right at first—she didn't boil it long enough, and I did not find it palatable and quit using it and went back to coffee and to the stomach trouble again.

"Then my wife took the matter in hand, and by following the directions on the box, faithfully, she had me drinking Postum several days before I knew it.

"When I happened to remark that I was feeling much better than I had for a long time, she told me that I had been drinking Postum, and that accounted for it. Now we have no coffee on our table.

"My digestion has been restored, and with this improvement has come relief from the oppressive sense of fullness and palpitation of the heart that used to bother me so. I note such a gain in mental strength and acuteness that I can attend to my office work with ease and pleasure and without making the mistakes that were so annoying to me while I was using coffee.

"Postum is the greatest table drink of the times, in my humble estimation." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

Sarcasticus.

Minnie—My mother says she's going to have company and will you lend her your spoons and a tureen and two pounds of butter and a little coffee and please let her have a chafing dish and are you using your meat chopper?

Mrs. Jopes—Why, certainly, my dear; here are the things. And as soon as my Johnny comes home from kindergarten I'll send him over with the piano and a couple of beds.

TRY MURINE EYE REMEDY.

for Red, Weak, Weary, Watery Eyes and Granulated Eyelids. Murine Doesn't Smart—Soothes Eye Pain. Druggists Sell Murine Eye Remedy, Liquid, 25c, 50c, $1.00. Murine Eye Salve in Aseptic Tubes, 25c, $1.00. Eye Books and Eye Advice Free by Mail.

Murine Eye Remedy Co., Chicago.

Fashion's Woes.

"Why do you weep?" inquired the sympathetic woman. "Is your hat out of style?"

"Worse than that?" replied Mrs. Chuggins. "My husband has decided that we will have to go through the summer with a 1910 automobile."

GOVERNMENT POSITIONS OPEN.

Any of our readers wishing a government positions should send postal immediately to Franklin Institute, Dept. K-80, Rochester, N. Y., for full list of position, open. This list shows the salaries paid; the duties required, and tells how to get the positions.

Ups-et Him.

Hub (angrily)—What! Thirty-five dollars for that new hat? You told me hats could be bought from $4 up.

Wifey—Yes, dear, this is one of the "ups."

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

Madame Mignotte's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

Unavoidable Delay.

"Has that man done anything worth mentioning in Congress?"

"Not yet," replied the loyal constituent. "He hasn't had a chance. He is still explaining how he got there."

J. P.

Those suffering from weakness and lack of vigor should take JUVEN PILLS. One box will tell a story of marvelous results. This medicine has more rejuvenating, vitalizing force than has ever before been offered. Sent postpaid only on receipt of this advertisement and $1. Made by its originators, C. I. HOOD Co., proprietors Hood's Sarsaparilla, LOWELL, MASS. (2)

(Continued from page five.)

nomena; in certain instances it is very pronounced."

"Could the dominating nature will the other to death?"

He stroked his great forehead a moment. "Possibly. But that question is beyond me. There is much connected with the subject with which I am not familiar."

"I am very obliged to you, Mr. Branford," I said, rising to go. He arose, and laying his hand upon my shoulder as affectionately as if I were a son, walked out through the long room with me, talking lovingly of his school.

That night I was aroused from terrible dreams. As I opened my eyes I saw the figure of a man melt into the door of the closet in the rear left hand corner of the room, but so mixed was the actual and phantasmal in my mind I could determine nothing clearly.

As I lay there, panting and damp with the moisture that springs of suspense, I clearly heard a movement in the closet and the click of a cocking pistol. Instantly I snatched the little revolver from beneath my pillow and sprang through the door into the front room. Cocking the pistol, I peered round the door-jamb to get a view of the closet door.

"Who is there, and what do you want?" I demanded.

For answer I saw the door being slowly pushed open. I leveled my little weapon at it, feeling icy waves fly over me with every heart beat. Suddenly a human figure burst out, I fired, a voice cried, "Oh!" and a man's form lunged forward onto the carpet and lay motionless. I quickly turned up the gas and sprang to the side of the prostrate man. He lay on his face in a kind of heap. In abject terror I turned him over until the light fell upon his features.

It was Lancewood Shirlaw!

I opened his coat to feel for his heart, and my father's diary fell out upon the floor!

CHAPTER XXIV.

There was a sudden noise of slamming doors, of voices shouting inquiringly, of feet hastening up from below and down from above upon stairs, and then of footsteps and voices approaching my door. I had stood over Shirlaw's prostrate body for a few seconds absolutely dazed, then picking up my father's diary I threw it into the closet, thrust my pistol under the pillow of my bed, locked the door, jerked on trousers, a long smoking gown and slippers, and stepped toward the door. Shirlaw lifted his head as I passed him, and with beseeching, agonized eyes, whispered:

"Say it is an accident, Stantree! for God's sake say it is an accident!"

I opened the door. An officer from the street and several male occupants of other rooms of the house filed in. Shirlaw had lifted himself to a sitting posture. He was pale as death itself, but there was a smile on his face.

"I—should have—should have been more careful in putting the treacherous thing in my pocket, Stantree," he said. "It was very careless of me to let it fall and explode the cartridge so!" He pushed his pistol out from under his body testily. The officer picked it up and looked at it. One of the chambers was empty and it was still smoking.

"Stantree, old fellow, will you get me a drop of water?" said the wounded man. "If you have a little liquor of any kind that will do. I am strangely faint. Ah! That is it! The water will suffice, Stantree! Don't feel badly, old boy, accidents will happen, you know!"

"Where is he hurt?" asked the officer.

"When the pistol struck the floor it exploded," said Shirlaw quickly, "and the bullet, I think, entered my right knee. At least my right limb is as nerveless as a bag of sand."

The officer stepped out into the passage and beckoned to me. I went out to him.

"Is this matter all right?" he asked, jerking his thumb toward the door.

"Quite," I answered. "The facts are not precisely as he states, but there is no complaint, officer."

"All right," he said, and went down the stair.

I heard Shirlaw talking coolly to the men, some of whom were binding up his limb. "I think it must have struck the bone," he said, "or perhaps cut one of the sciatic nerves, as the lower portion of my limb is without sensation. I fancy the latter may be the case since the shock rendered me insensible for a moment. It was very foolish! a boyish lack of care! It was surely not the fault of the wine; we had taken but little. It being late, and not having a pistol with me, I borrowed Mr. Stantree's as I was going. As I neared the door I attempted to place the weapon in my pocket, when it slipped from my hand and fell. You see the result! Now for a month in bed, then crutches for a time and may be always! It is a pretty picture, gentlemen!" He laughed rather gratingly.

And so they rattled off with Shirlaw still talking volubly. He had scarcely given any one an opportunity to say a word. I was fairly stupefied with the man's capacity to lie.

I went into the front room and sat down, and put to myself some very knotty questions.

Was it the ball from my pistol which had wounded Shirlaw? What was his object in attempting thus to rob me of the personal memoranda made by my father? Was it that he thought to entrap my father with evidence of crime which lay buried in the foreign tongue of the diary? Or had Shirlaw himself taken part in something illegal, a compromising record of which was contained in this mysterious memoranda?

An idea presented itself. I arose and stepped to the door connecting the two rooms and examined it. Ah, here was the solution! a fresh bullet-hole in the door-jamb, close to the spot where my head had been when I pulled the trigger! Clearly it had come from the direction of the closet! I was satisfied; the polished rake, let him digest my gift!

I lay down again after a time, but slept no more while darkness reigned. When the dawn began to filter in through the curtains, and life was abroad sowing noise throughout the city, my alarm and waking visions died away, and I slept.

It was afternoon when I awoke, and, making a hasty toilet, and locking the diary in the hand bag, I went to a restaurant.

When I had eaten lightly, for through all those troublous weeks I cared for but little food, I went down Rue Royale, passing Shirlaw's lodgings.

I turned presently and loitered back to the Antoine garden behind St. Louis

I hurled the missile straight at the animal's flaming eyes.

cathedral, and entering the quaint place, sat down and fell to brooding.

I got up after a time and moved restlessly about. I walked out into the old street that skirts the sleeping garden's foot and stood irresolute. Before me another street led away northwestward, falling slightly downward toward the rear of the city; old Orleans street this, lined with small houses, rough paved, sunny and silent. I then set off toward the river in a direction I had not yet explored. I do not know the names of the streets by which I went, nor the distance traveled, for I gave small heed to them. I only remember that I walked for a long time, and that the nervous rage which impelled me ebbed away at last, and I found my feet halting here and there along a wall of stone which guarded a broad carriage way from the waters of the great river. Being weary, I sat down upon a jutting stone and fell to watching the spectacle before me. As I sat thus, carriages were rolling to and fro along the esplanade back of me. I was hardly in a mood to find humanity on exhibition interesting, and only glanced at the equipages occasionally; the somber, smoky glory of the ship-freighted river being far more impressive.

Suddenly I heard a commotion along the esplanade up stream, and turning on my seat, I saw men running toward the center of the street, shouting and flinging up hands, then drivers lashing their teams, and vehicles swerving to right and left, and a single splendid horse hurling a carriage through a medley of wheels, limbs, dust and human figures. The fright-maddened animal was perhaps five hundred feet from me and close to the wall when I looked up. Involuntarily I got to my feet, and as I did so I saw the carriage hub strike the wall. A spurt of fire flew out at the point of impact, and the driver shot from his high seat and struck across the coping stone of the rampart with a thud. The horse instantly swerved off across the open ground; there were screams, whip cuts, dust, confusion all down the esplanade. Two mounted officers came spurring up the great drive, shouting, I know not what, through the tumult. As the runaway neared the city side of the drive, hands and hats were thrown toward him, and he shot off in a curve directly toward me. He was a mighty animal, superb in his madness, and he came like the wind. For a short distance on the curve the carriage careened, cutting the ground with its left hand wheels and sending the dust spurting in air. The officers were riding headlong directly at me. They were shouting either for me to clear the way or hold the breach; I cannot say which. I heard hundreds of voices yelling. I saw nothing plainly but the horse; the bit had burst in its mouth and the bridle was stripped back to the animal's shoulders, leaving the fiery head clean of restraining strap or rein. In the carriage I saw a white face, if man or woman's in that wild moment I could not have told. Never in my life has thought presented itself to me as it did in that brief breath of time. Something passed through my soul like a shout, yet it was as a sheet of light. Death was there for the one in the carriage, let me hurl back the black angel! I had taken a life, let me save one! He who reads cannot know what this thought was to me. It was like the peal of a great bell; a leap of salvation; I know not what. I caught up a ragged stone the size of a man's two fists, leaped out in front of the breach, drew back my arm, and as the frothing front of the horse came down upon me, I hurled the missile with all my strength straight at the animal's flaming eyes.

It was an appalling blow, the shock of the horse's breast against me. The impact flung me backward upon the ground with stunning force. As I was falling, I saw the animal's body pass close over my eyes, and felt its heat upon my face; he struck the rocks just beyond me with a groan and a crash, the carriage went over me and turned upon its side, throwing the occupant out; I scrambled to my feet and stood gasping.

I was clutching at my heart, I remember; there seemed a knife sticking in me there. I seemed to be looking through a film of blood, the waters and the distant banks of smoke and the sky seemed incarnadined. In a dazed way I saw that the horse lay at the brink of the breach, three of its limbs doubled awkwardly under its body and the other thrust out over the edge. Its head, too, was craned outward, and I saw, with a sick horror, that from a hole in its forehead a red stream was spurting off into the river below.

The hazy, crimson tone of things troubled me; it seemed so strange and unearthly. Even the faces and clothing of human figures that seemed to start up miraculously all about me had a crimson cast. I wondered what they were talking to me about; I could see their lips moving, but could hear nothing. I turned round and round; something warm was running down my face and dropping from my chin. I brushed some of it off in my hand and looked at it; it was redder than the rest.

They were helping a man to his feet nearby, and brushing the dust from his clothes. I tried to go toward him, but suddenly hands had hold of me, there was a multitude of faces swimming about me, dim, shifting, turning to a sea of greenish rust. Then for the first time since the blow I heard voices. They seemed shouting from throats of metal, "Lay him down, why don't you! Call an ambulance! There, he's falling! Has no one in this crowd got any brandy? God! what a lick he struck that horse! Crushed its head like an egg shell! Where's that officer? Here, this way! Why, Dr. Beckwith, is it you that was thrown out? Are you hurt? No, not at all! Get back, will you? let me see the man that stopped the horse!" And thus the voices clacked, each word bursting in my ears like a blow struck upon an anvil. All the time, which, in fact, was but a few seconds, I seemed standing in inky darkness. Suddenly, as if a great bat's wings had flapped upon my bare brain, the darkness winked and I knew no more.

Presently, though to me it was as with the next breath, I seemed rising swiftly from the bottom of an ocean of black water. I seemed to hear it gurgling in my ears and rushing coldly against my face, then it became spotted with dim, round windows of rose, and suddenly with a gasp I reached the surface.

I was lying in an ambulance.

On every hand cars, carriages, cotton ladened wagons, horses' and human feet were pounding over the pavement. Beside the vehicle in which I lay a mounted policeman jogged heavily along, a burly officer sat on a seat near my feet, and above me on the right hand was the face I caught a glimpse of in the carriage as it came hurling toward me across the esplanade.

"Hullo!" said a deep bass voice, "you have arrived!" The face beamed down upon me. "Don't try to talk, my boy. Just expend your energy in getting your breath. You need it." The bass voice was not musical, but it had a soothing kind of drawl that made it oddly agreeable. It was a strong, stern-looking face from which the voice came; it looked that its habit might be a harsh gravity, but around the lips were tender lines, and just now, at least, the eyes, a kind of amber-gray in color, shone gracious and encouraging.

"Just close your eyes and fight the pain off; we shall be there in about five minutes," said the voice.

"Where are you taking me to?" I managed to gasp.

"Home with me. Your ribs need a little fixing up. I will talk with you after that is done; now, you must be quiet."

It seemed a long time before the wagon stopped. When it came to a standstill it was under the low roof of a porte-cochere. A large door, across a porch floor to the left, opened into a house which was like a small castle. This house was of red brick and stood in the center of a tiny park.

"Turpentine! Juniper! here!" roared the bass voice.

A black youth shot out of the door.

"Turp, you and Juniper put the downstairs right hand guest room in order. Be quick!"

"Yes, Marse," and Turpentine disappeared.

The mounted policeman sprang down and came to the wagon; the other officer, who never once opened his mouth, save occasionally to turn a lump of tobacco in his cheek and expectorate, took hold of the handles of a kind of stretcher on which I lay, and I was lifted out and borne through the door.

"Be careful, men! Go easy!" cautioned the bass voice all the way. "That's right, turn in here. Now, lay him on the operating table here by the windows! Look out, you are hurting him! Let me get my hands under him! Slow now! Steady! steady! There, he's gone again! No, he's coming back! Hold hard to your senses, my boy! Let us do the work. All right now! That is good. Juniper, here!"

"Yes, Marse."

"Go over—tell Dr. Ainsworth I want him to help me with some work—fly, now."

"Yes, Marse."

"Officers, I shall not need you now. I am obliged to you. One of you look in at the hospital as you go back, please, and tell Longswath I will be there in an hour or so to see my driver."

When they were gone he turned to me. I turned my eyes upon him. He had a head like a lion; a great shock of chestnut hair falling back from a slightly retreating forehead, a high bridged, prominent nose, a strong mouth and jaw and cheeks that were faintly hollow. Below this dominating physiognomy was a long, powerful body, supported by a pair of short, sturdy legs. The whole height of the man was slightly below the medium, but there was a look of push and force in him such as one seldom meets.

He said nothing more to me, but began taking bandages and surgeon's tools of different kinds from a cabinet. He laid these upon a side table, then came and stood beside me. His face had an austere, half-savage look, and he shot a quick gleam into my eyes from his amber-gray orbs. Placing a hand upon each of my temples with his thumbs meeting across my forehead, he drew the thumbs slowly and with

strong pressure down toward my eyes. This he repeated several times, keeping his eyes riveted intently upon mine the while. With the pressure he produced a numbness in the region of my eyes, and to relieve this I closed them, but found I could not open them again. My pain ebbed away and ceased, a drowsy and not unpleasant kind of sleep crept over me; my conscious identity was lost.

I knew that my hurts were being mended; a sort of sub-consciousness, that did not seem mine, told me that; but I felt not the slightest pain. I do not know through what length of duration or by what means I reached my normal faculties again, but presently I was looking about me with interest.

A slender, dark man was with Dr. Beckwith, supposedly Dr. Ainsworth. He was arranging some objects about the room, putting instruments back into cases, folding up appliances and bandages. Dr. Beckwith, the hair of his leonine head all stumble, was standing beside me. His face had lost its almost cruel intensity of expression; his eyes had a tender, smiling look.

"Hullo, my boy, you are back again!" he said to me. He shot his hand across my forehead and down the side of my face, a kind of caressing blow expressive of his admiration and gratitude. "How do you feel?"

"Not badly, I think."

His eyes beamed. "Breathe easy?" he queried.

I respired deeply. "Rather. There is a slight constriction; I expect that."

His eyes widened slightly. "It's the bandages."

"There was a scalp wound?"

"Yes, rather a bad one. The horse's shoe or the carriage tire cut you. It's back from your forehead; won't leave a visible scar."

"Any indentation of the skull?"

"Slight, but no fracture; all come out right, my boy."

"Ribs cracked? How many?"

"Three."

"Thanks. Any other breaks?"

"None; several bad bruises; be sore, but you'll come out nicely."

"Thank you."

We both smiled. "Any more questions?" he asked.

"That's all."

He smiled again. "All right, then I will take the witness stand. Are you a doctor or a lawyer?"

"I have looked into surgery and medicine a little."

"I see. Where?"

"At Ann Arbor, Michigan; in a hospital, Chicago."

"Ah! may I ask your name?"

"Yes, sir. Francis Stanwood."

His eyes widened again. "Are you a relative of Dr. Julian Stanwood?"

"His son."

He blew a long, low whistle of surprise, and looked toward the slim, dark man. "Ainsworth, come here! Let me introduce you to Mr. Stanwood, Dr. Stanwood's son!"

The man addressed came and took my hand, an expression of strong interest, even of wonder, in his eyes. He had a French cast, delicate, refined, dark. "I am gratified to know you, Mr. Stanwood," he said in soft, clear English. "Both Beckwith and myself have met your father; a learned and interesting gentleman."

"Thank you."

"Would you like to have your father come?" asked Beckwith. "If so I will write to him. His country address is—"

I hesitated. "No, I believe not. I think I should prefer that you would not disturb him at present."

"All right, my boy; you shall be just as well cared for."

"Now, no more interviewing; you must rest; of course you understand, Juniper, here!"

"Yes, Marse."

"Bring the invalid chair; it is on the lower gallery."

A kind of combined divan and chair was presently rolled into the room, and with the assistance of four pairs of hands, I managed to transfer myself from the table to its ample hold. The little upholstered car was then pushed through a hall into a large room, which looked out into a little flower garden. Here I found a pleasant bed—a bed upon which I lay most of the time for well upon a month.

When I had taken it that day, Dr. Beckwith said, his bass voice full of warmth: "Now, Stanwood, this house, all that is in it, servants included, is yours to will and to do with at your pleasure. My colored boys here will wait upon you. If they don't do it as though they were serving a king, why, heaven have mercy on their souls! I sail for Europe in the morning; may be away two months. I want to see you when I return; I have a proposition to make to you. You will hardly be wanting to leave this roof before that time. Wherever your lodgings were until now, send the boys and have your things brought here. You need not protest; you're in no condition to do so; besides, it would do you no good; like the political candidate, you are in the hands of your friends. Ainsworth will come in to see you every day. Just help yourself to anything or everything; order what you want, pay for nothing. I must go to the hospital now; that black boy got a hard fall, I am afraid; must look after several things before morning; will try and shake your hand before I go."

He pressed my hand and pushed his way out, giving orders to the colored man as he went. He affected one's imagination, somehow, as if he were a powerful, low-wheeled engine rapidly pushing a great number of cars before him.

Darkness was falling outside. Turpentine set the gas burning; Ainsworth was pounding some sort of crisp drug in a mortar in the room across the hall, grinding the pestle into it now and then; Juniper came in with a tray of food. I drank the coffee.

"You may take the balance away," I said; "I cannot eat."

I closed my eyes. I had found him—the other of the two whom my father had known as men of remarkable psychic power! Breslau was one; he was as one dead! Beckwith was the other; he was going to Europe in the morning. I could not go to my mother now if I would. He would not return for two months. Oh, snail-paced time! Oh, harsh and unforgiving fate!

CHAPTER XXV.

Early in the morning of the day following that one in which I was hurt on the esplanade, Beckwith came striding into my room. I think he had not slept during the night, probably had not been in the house since he left it the evening before. He looked a trifle weary and austere, but brightened when I looked up to his face.

"Hullo, my boy! how is the anatomy by this time?"

"Sore," I said, trying to smile.

"Yes, I could have guaranteed you that."

He went over to the window and stood a moment looking out. I saw a portion of his face outlined against the light. His lips were twitching and he seemed struggling to master himself. He whirled his strong body about and came back to me. "Stanwood," he burst out, "this is hard! If the gift of my right arm would send you off to Europe, and leave myself lying here to suffer in your stead, the thing might be whacked off! You know it is nonsense to attempt to thank a man for such an act as yours. I shall not try it. Some time in some way I hope to show you a thing or two in the line of gratitude."

He smiled, but his lips trembled, and he turned and roared, "Turpentine! Juniper, here!"

Turpentine came tearing forward through the hall. "My God, boy, are you going to let Mr. Stanwood lie here and starve to death?" the doctor demanded.

The young man bored his fists into his eyes in an apparent attempt to open both eyes and mind, and turned round and round as if in search of an idea, saying, "Yes, Marse! No, Marse!" in a confused way.

"Has Jeb got things going in the kitchen?" asked Beckwith.

"I think so, Marse. I d'no, Marse."

"Well, go and see. Have him hurry things up." He turned toward me. "Did any one stay with you last night, Mr. Stanwood?"

"Dr. Ainsworth came twice before midnight. I kept one of your men around until late. I wanted for nothing."

"I wished to be here and stay with you myself, but it was impossible. There was a board meeting, and there were patients whom I felt it my duty to see before I started for Paris. I am taken abroad by professional matters; otherwise I would not go. When I return I may bring some notions or information beneficial to us all; I want to see you then."

"Thank you. I shall be anxious for your return. Until then it will be about how long?"

"Nearly two months, I think. I am invited to take part in some rather peculiar experiments, necessarily occupying a number of weeks; besides the special object of my journey there is other information, better obtainable in Paris than elsewhere, which I wish to look after. I am off at 9 o'clock. I have some letters to write; will look in as I go."

He hurriedly pushed out of the room. Two hours later he gripped my hand a moment and was gone.

Juniper was straightening objects about the room.

"Has Dr. Beckwith a wife?" I inquired.

"No, sah, he don' had no use fo' nuttin' ob de kine," said Juniper, a note of indignation in his voice. "Wut he want to be pestered wid a wife fo'? Reckon he has!"

I said nothing. Juniper worked on, though I think to no other purpose than that he might talk to me.

"De doctah, git a ha'd lick once on de wife bizness," he said, rubbing at the window.

"Yes?"

"Yes, dat wuz fifteen years ergo. He wuz jus' twenty-five den, I mind. I wuz 'bout twenty. I done been raised by he fadder, ole Ma'se Beckwith, up nigh Jackson. You s'e, Marse Stanwood, de doctah he set big sto' by a gal up nigh home d'reg fo' eber so long, eber since he been a lil boy, seems lak. Well, he done been away to school lots an' nudder feller git de gal's heart away f'om him, dough he not know dat. Well, Marse Paul, dat's de doctah's name, he done go to Oorup to finish he eddication, an' he stay way two year. Ole Marse Beckwith an' de gal's folks, an' dey all, dey hab it fixed up wut Marse Paul an' her is to be married de day befo' he birfday, an' de nex' day dey hab a big pa'ty, an' Marse Paul an' de young 'oman—my king! but she wuz a beauty—dey wuz married. Dat ebenin' de bride turned up missin'. De nex' mawnin' dey foun' her in de ribber dead. She lef' a letter sayin' she kep' her word wid Marse Paul, but she belonged in truf to anodder man. Dat knock Marse Paul all to flinders, seem lak. He nebber mak love to no 'oman since dat day, an' he not likely to, elder."

"It was sad, indeed," I said, touched by the homely recital, "but is it right for you to tell such things to a stranger?"

The colored man looked disturbed. "Well, mebbe 'taint," he said; "but de doctah's gwine tink more ob you dan' anybody else, I ken see dat, an' 'pears lak you got er right to know. My king! W'en he might be layin' yere hu't, er mebbie daid, if it hain't been fo' wut you done, I tink you might be desidered he frien'!"

"I shall think no less of him for what you have told me, Juniper. I am sorry he has no wife or children. It seems sad."

"Yes, suh, it do; but he dat taken up wid he wuk he not miss 'em. Leasewise he not let on none. He gwine hab he niece come an' be mistis ob de house one ob dese days, he say. She jus' a young gal yit, de dotah ob Professah Branfo'd, de bline man wot run de bline school out on St. John's road. Marse Paul—I cayn't keep f'om callin' him dat, I'ze so used to it—he owns de proppaty. He gwine leave it all, or a right sma't ob it, to he niece w'en he dies, if she don't git married, I spec. He mighty fon' ob her, but he don' want nobody to marry 'er; he daid set ergin marryin', anyhow, Marse Paul is. He hab an'er niece, but she done gwine jine de nuns. Marse Paul he lak her, but dat ain' he chu'ch, an' he don' lak see his money go in dar, I spec."

"Yes. Excuse me for changing the subject, Juniper, but I wish you would have the young man who helps you go to my rooms, on Rue Royale, and bring a handbag which hangs in the closet there. Also a few other things which he can make a bundle of; the woman who keeps the apartments will show him. Can you write, Juniper?"

"Yo, but Tupentine kin, Marse."

"Have him come here, please."

"Yes, Marse."

Turpentine came and with a deal of hard breathing, twisting his head from side to side, and thrusting out his tongue, succeeded in setting down my former address. He then departed. Juniper remained, dusting, dabbing and rubbing at the surface of the furniture for the second or third time. He began talking again. Touching upon the runaway horse, its history, the event of the day before, and the condition of the injured coachman. Coming back presently to Dr. Beckwith he became reminiscent, recounting at great length events of their boyhood. At length he said: "Marse Paul, he say fo' me to keep things nice an' quiet fo' you, an' I'ze gwine do it. If you jus' git de leas bit ob hankerin' aftah anyting, Marse Stanwood, he say to git fo' you, sho', if it's in New O'leans."

"All right, Juniper. Are there any books in the house?"

"In dis yere house?"

"Yes, Juniper."

"Books? Marse Stanwood, dere's boat loads ob 'em? You lak some?"

"Yes, after awhile. You can draw a table up here and put them upon it. My arms are pretty sore, but I think I can hold a book. At least in a few days I can."

The good but loquacious soul wheeled a table near the head of the bed, and brought in at least a barrow load of books and piled them upon it.

"Thank you, Juniper," I said.

"Yo'se welcome, Marse Stanwood. W'y, if I c'd read dem books, I'd jus' read to you day an' night, dat's wut I would."

After a time he went away to work in other quarters of the house, and left me to quiet and thought.

Dr. Ainsworth came toward noon, and having dressed my hurts, went away. Turpentine came with my bag and other articles. Having had Juniper unlock and look into the bag, we found the diary safe.

After that the days and nights went snail-paced, dragging through April towards May. I think I should have gone mad but for the books Juniper kept freshly piled upon my table. Ainsworth proved skillful and entertaining. We had many conversations, but these were necessarily short, for he was a busy man.

Twice or thrice we talked of occultism, going from point to point, until he, with some obvious reservations, acknowledged Beckwith's gift, and that his journey to Paris was in the interest of experiments looking to the use of his influence in rendering patients insensible to the surgeon's knife. He also spoke of my father and Breslau, saying that my father doubtless wielded a hypnogenic influence unapproached by any other known person.

(Continued on page eight.)

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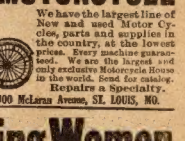

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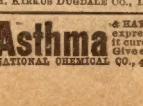

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Only a very rich man can afford to have things given to him.

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Many a man's failure is due to the fact that he bit off more than he could chew.

Occasionally the only thing the fool-killer need do is to set the pace that exterminates.

There's always something about a wedding that doesn't suit a woman who was not invited.

Marriage is about the only thing that can convince an old bachelor that he doesn't know it all.

Women have queer ideas of a good time, but they seldom have a dark brown taste next morning.

When a man bets and loses his money he attributes it to ill luck, but when he wins he thinks it due to his smartness.

(Continued from page seven.)

He brought me books from the library, some of them proving to be identical with those volumes of eastern literature which I found on my father's table. Such books, if in my father's possession when I had been at home in my boyhood, had doubtless been secreted from me. Now, through this month in which I lay healing from my hurts, I studied them with a thirst that could not be satisfied.

CHAPTER XXVI.

One morning, toward the warm end of April, I arose, and with Juniper's help, got into my clothes and crept out upon the gallery. The soreness of my bruises had gradually died away, my cracked bones were knit, but not yet hardened at the point of fracture, the wound upon my head was all but closed, and I was without pain. I was weak and stiff, but these would only go with exercise. So in slippered feet I began walking about the little park and through the house.

This latter was somewhat disappointing; money in lavish quantity had been expended upon its decoration and equipment, that was plain; but the refining, home-making hand of woman had not wrought there, and to me such places are somehow always sad. Presently I began walking a short distance along the street in which the house stood, then ventured to a park not far away, then over into the heart of the city, always looking for Beckwith's return and chafing against the lag-foot, time. Champ the bit of impatience as I would, I must wait.

With the first week in May I began wandering again, going everywhere in a fruitless effort to consume time and allay my nervous impatience. One day I was out to the old Spanish fort, another day at Carrollton, watching the shipping go swiftly around the swirling bend in the river; again I was at Mandeville, across the lake; then again on the levee, or lounging by the Ursuline convent in hopes of catching a glimpse of the pale little sister.

One day Dr. Ainsworth sat by me on the lower gallery of Beckwith's house.

"The doctor has written again," he said. "As usual, he inquires after your health and sends you his love."

"Thank him for me, please. Does he report good progress? Will he be home soon?"

"Yes, to the first part of your question; as to the last, it may be two weeks, it may be four, he says; all depending upon the outcome of some investigations he has engaged in."

I sighed. "By the by, Mr. Stanwood," he went on, "there is an item which I proposed speaking to you about, but it has persistently evaded my memory when we were together, until now. It is that your father owns a boat, a yacht, I think, either alone, or as partner with a man named Breslau; the latter has immediate charge of the boat. But I fancy this is not news to you?"

"Indeed is. You will understand, doctor, when you consider that I have been absent in the north for five years," I replied.

"Ah, yes. Well, it lies in a private slip somewhere below the city. This Breslau who has it in charge is not the unfortunate person whom we were discussing some time since, the man you saw in the hands-house, but a brother of that one. The poor fellow whom you saw comes to me occasionally for a palliative and he it was who told me. He said they had expected that your father would come to the city ere this; that they were going to run down and touch at some Cuban points. He seemed disappointed."

"Yes?"

"Of course—or at least I suppose, that the craft might be at your disposal; that is, if you cared to use it. No doubt your father has been detained. If he should arrive soon, you might take a trip into the gulf and return here by the time Dr. Beckwith arrives."

What could I say? Oh, God, would it be always thus? No doubt my father had been detained! If he only knew the dizzying whirl of thoughts his words set going in my brain! I glanced at his face; he pulled a rose from the espalier at the edge of the gallery and was fixing it upon the lapel of his coat.

"I am obliged to you, doctor," I said. "I think I should like to see the boat, and might go down to it tomorrow—if I could find it."

"I am not sure where she lies, else I would take you there by carriage. However, you could drop around by Breslau's lodging place and ascertain the exact position of the boat. There is more likelihood of finding him in during the forenoon than at any other time in the day."

"Thank you. I will go and see him in the morning."

After darkness had fallen that evening I wandered down to the levee and stood watching a great steamer deliver its human freight upon the dock. I was thinking of Beckwith, and wondering if I should ever see him step ashore, when I felt a heavy hand laid upon my shoulder. I turned my head and there stood Marker of Port Garcia.

His broad, stout body was clad in citizen's clothes, a kind of slouched military hat being pulled down over his eyes, and his strong jaw was set after the manner of the bulldog. The sight of him struck me like a blow. I staggered back and looked at him as if he had been an object of horror. In one breath a hundred possibilities swept through my mind. Two policemen were apparently accompanying him, a hundred people or more were crowding around.

"Come out this way," said Marker, "I want to speak with yeh."

We pushed our way out into the open, the officers taking the lead. Marker kept his hand upon my arm. When we had proceeded far enough to shake off a part of the curious rabble I turned to Marker and said:

"Well, sir, what is it?" though in my heart of hearts I knew too well the terrible bolt that would fall upon me.

"Yr wanted in Garcia," he said. "I've come for yeh, Mr. Stanwood; yr my prisoner!"

I looked down upon his dark, saturnine face, and thought of Beckwith and my mother. It was too late! all was lost! Oh, God, have mercy!

"Upon what charge do you arrest me?" I demanded, straining to stifle the tremor in my voice. I was shaken to the very bottom of my nature.

"The indictment reads, 'for the murder of his father, Dr. Julian Stanwood, on March 11th, near the residence of the latter' "—he began drawing papers from his pocket. "I'll read yeh the warrant."

"Will you permit me to look at it, Mr. Marker?" I asked.

"No. I'll read it to yeh," he said, shortly.

"It is not necessary, sir," I said. "I will accompany you. Lead the way."

Hundreds of people were streaming along the brilliantly lighted street. I stood in the midst of it, feeling or seeing little of the moving life about me. Garcia, Magnolia Place and all that country came before me, clear, definite, singularly near.

The officers pushed off through the crowd, and Marker and I followed. It would be impossible to commit to paper the thoughts that had flight through my brain, or to put into language the emotions that welled up in my bosom, as I walked to prison that night. Chief among these was the terrible thought that Marguerite would now know all. Yet, upon the very threshold of this disaster the purpose was forming in my mind to confess the entire truth to her, should I ever be permitted to see her again.

I had never looked upon the interior of a prison in my life, had never witnessed the proceedings of a court. These had been as plague spots to me, places to be shunned; now I was to enter them, not as a spectator, but as chief actor, though dishonored and despised. The thought alone gave me a sense of suffocation; what would the actual experience be?

At the end of perhaps ten minutes, surrounded by policemen, and with Marker's hand upon my arm, I walked down a stone corridor and into a steel-lined cell. The bolts shot to their places, the key turned. I was as a wild beast shut away from mankind!

The men lingered about the grated door, looking in upon me as upon an animal of some curious sort. I swept my eyes around the cell and across their fat, ruddy faces. What a strange, pitiless, cruel thing humanity was, when one of its atoms was thought to be dangerous to the whole!

Marker bustled about, pulling papers from his pockets and returning them unread; a country sheriff displaying his acumen and importance before the guardians of the great town. These latter were talking among themselves. I said nothing. Had I been innocent doubtless I would have raved. I was guilty; there seemed nothing to say.

I sat down upon the iron cot by the wall and looked at the floor. I felt strange, half numb, wholly without hope or plan. One of the officers shook the door and spoke to me.

"Well, sir, what is it?" I asked.

"Where have you been stopping?"

"At Dr. Beckwith's house." I gave him the number and street.

"Are you the man who stopped Beckwith's horse on the North Drive a month or so ago?"

"Yes, sir."

He looked at the others. "Have you any clothing at Dr. Beckwith's?" he asked.

"A few articles and a hand-bag."

"Would you like to have them brought here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is there any friend or person you would like to see or consult with?"

"No, sir."

"Would you like to have any one called to see you?"

"No, sir. Is Mr. Marker there?"

"He has gone to the office."

"How soon can we start for Port Garcia? Do you know?"

"No, I'm sure I don't. You are not in a hurry, are you?"

"Yes, sir."

The man relieved himself with an oath, and turning to the other officers, began talking with them in a low tone. "I tell you, Bill, it's none of our affairs," I heard one of them say, and with an oath the one addressed replied: "It don't make a bit of dif, the young feller ought to have a show."

The one who had been questioning me turned to the grated door. "Wouldn't you like an attorney sent in to talk with you?" he asked.

"No, I think not, thank you," I replied.

He placed a hand upon each side of his mouth and said in a loud whisper: "I don't think your country friend has got out extradition papers for you. You might stave 'em off awhile on that line."

I thought a moment. "No," I replied, "I am obliged to you, but I don't care for the notoriety of such proceedings. I would rather go home at once and face my accusers."

"All right. You're a game boy, anyway. I'll send for your things soon as I see the cap'in."

They withdrew, leaving only a guard walking up and down the gas-lighted corridor. I could hear the occasional shuffling of feet in other cells and now and then the sound of human voices. I began pacing my cell, a hundred hideous fancies tugging at my heart. So I had come to the place at last! I had felt myself slipping down an incline toward an abyss, now I was passing over the fatal edge! Would not the hangman's noose and a grave of shame receive me at the bottom?

The guard shook the grated door. "Prisoner, are you awake?" he asked roughly.

"Yes, sir."

"Here is a gentleman to see you."

I went to the door. The officer who had questioned me an hour before was there, behind him stood Dr. Ainsworth.

CHAPTER XXVII.

My friend had brought the hand-bag, and other articles that were mine. He was visibly affected by the spectacle I presented, caged thus like a wild beast. I could scarcely speak to him; there seemed little we could say.

Marker and the superintendent of the prison came down the corridor. With great officiousness they searched my few belongings for concealed weapons or other dangerous matter, then the bag and the garments were passed into the cell. They all then withdrew save the guard and Ainsworth.

I thanked him for his confidence and good wishes from the bottom of my heart, but was far from sharing his sanguine hopes. Was there anything that he could do for me? Anything or all that he and Dr. Beckwith possessed was at my disposal. Beckwith was his best friend, and a man vastly valuable to humanity. I had done both the man and the world a great service. If possible, I should be decently requited.

I was deeply touched by his generosity. Yes, I had a favor to beg, not relative to this misfortune of mine, but for the sake of my life's best friend.

I wanted, above all things that I could conceive, that Beckwith should come to Magnolia Place directly upon his return from Europe. A life was to be saved by him, I hoped, which was far more precious than my own. Even if the day of his return to these shores were a month distant, tell him that I prayed him to come instantly. I would ask nothing for myself but this, that he come for my friend's sake quickly. Doubtless the sheriff would start with me for Florida on the morrow. I would leave a letter of instruction for Beckwith in custody of the prison superintendent.

No, Ainsworth would come for it in person in the morning. I could depend on Beckwith to come to my house if he reached these shores alive. He was a man who never forgot a kindness, much less such a service as I had rendered him. Was there nothing that money could do for me? It was very potent! I thought not. Help of me must come of other sources, of propitious circumstances, if at all. Beckwith's action in the end might favorably influence my fate.

He grasped my fingers between the iron rods and begging that I would keep good courage, hurried away.

I called the guard. Would he please turn the arm bearing the gas jet so the light would fall more fully into my cell? I wished to write.

Without a word he pushed the jet close to the bars and went his way. I got some paper from the hand-bag and a pencil from my pockekt, and holding the bag against the bars, with the paper upon it, scrawled teh following:

Dr. Beckwith,

My Dear Sir:—

Dr. Ainsworth, whom I have to thank for many kindnesses, will no doubt tell you of that which has befallen me. You will understand, without assurances from me, that my situation is grave, and that to attempt to canvass it here is not easy for me. I can only say that I hope circumstances may not seem so against me in the end as now.

That which I desire most to plead for here is not help for myself, though God knows if that were possible it would be welcome, but that my mother, who lies apparently dead near my home in Florida, may be restored to life again. I have no doubt that when you read these words you will think me demented; but I beg you will be patient with me. I may be mad in respect to this; I am not sure of my sanity; no honest man I believe is; but I will briefly set down my reasons and leave you to judge.

You are quite aware, I believe, that my father, Dr. Stanford, is by nature and through research, master of a very great power, call it hypnotic, psychic, demoniac, what you will. I am neither master of its terms or its secrets. This force I have reason to believe he employed against my beloved mother some four months ago, reducing her to the death trance, or a condition so closely resembling death that no superficial test or examination may say that her life is not extinct.

You may perhaps remember that, though young, I am somewhat familiar with the aspects of mortal dissolution. I call this to your memory that it may have, if possible, weight with you when I say that I personally opened my mother's tomb, and examined her body, and could not convince myself but that the vital spark still lived in her. You of course are familiar with the fact that human beings are sometimes interred and return to life in the grave; that the Yogi of India apparently die and after months return to life again; that all animal life has the capacity, under certain conditions, to enter into apparent death and come forth to normal action again. You have far more knowledge of this than I. Then, Oh, sir, why may not my mother be lying in such a state? Believe me, she is unchanged; there are no marks of decay upon her! In the coronal region there is a faint warmth; she sleeps! sleeps!

But I must contain myself. My heart leaps so with the thought I cannot reason. That which I want to ask of you is that you will come to my father's home in Florida and look upon my mother's face—nay, if she still lives, restore her to active life again!

I am aware that you possess a similar power to that which made my father great, in a sense, and dangerous; and if it prove that he bound my mother with this silence in which she lies, Oh, sir, could you not waken and free her? I know full well that no common means will ever melt this mysterious swoon away from her; only such power as bound her may loose her again. And if this power come not—Ah, then will she not sleep on until she turn at last to dust?

You may think me mad, but, Oh, sir, I implore you, come!

I must collect myself again. The matter overcomes me. You ask me for the motive for the deed? I answer that at the end of two months, after my mother was laid in the tomb, my father took a wife a very beautiful young woman! You ask if the deed itself were possible? I answer that my father confesses in his diary that he had come dangerously near producing death in others by this force, and that he expressed his belief that actual death could be produced by such agency.

I need not say to you that this is intended for your eyes alone; your own intuition will, I know, present to you the extreme delicacy of my position, as well as the enormity of the accusation contained in my plea. My father is dead. It is hard for me to arraign him thus, even before a single just and discreet man, much less to accuse him before the world without proof. If I could have given you reasons for the grave matter I have brought before you, without injuring his memory, believe me I would gladly have done so. But as the physician to this case I felt that you must know the whole truth. If I am mad, then God pity me!

If you come, and I cannot but believe you will whatever the result, take steamer for Pensacola, thence by smaller boat to Port Garcia. The name of the estate is Magnolia Place. It lies some fifteen miles inland from Port Garcia. Doubtless if you come within a month you will find me in the jail at the last named town; in that case you might have personal directions from me. If I am dead or elsewhere, I beg that you will take a horse at Port Garcia and go to Magnolia Place. South of Magnolia House, something more than half a mile, you will find my mother's tomb in a little cemetery on a knoll. She lies, coffined, in a crypt in the brick tomb. The staples holding the bar of the door are drawn. I left the casket unfastened. God give you strength to waken her to life again!

FRANCIS STANWOOD.

When I had sealed the letter in an envelope and inscribed Beckwith's address upon it, I paced the cell until morning.

It was a weary, age-long night to me, but at last the gray of dawn crept in through the barred window at the end of the iron room, and the guard extinguished the lights in the corridor. After a time food and coffee were brought to me. I drank the latter but had no wish for the other. Then presently Dr. Ainsworth came hurrying down the corridor, and with the guard hovering near, we had a half hour together. During the course of our conversation, as the doctor leaned against the bars, I slipped the letter for Beckwith into the breast of his coat unobserved by the guard.

Then fell, in respect of my pride, the hardest moment in all my years.

Heavy feet came tramping along the echoing corridor, there was a rattle of keys at the iron door, and presently Marker, carrying steel manacles in his hand, and accompanied by two policemen, marched into the cell.

"Well, my man," said Marker, in a brusque, heartless way, "let me snap these shackles on y'r wrists, then we'll be goin'."

"Oh, my God, Stanwood!" exclaimed Ainsworth, "I can never endure the sight!" He turned his eyes, full of unspeakable sympathy, upon his face, snatched my hands and pressed them, and hurried from the place.

I looked at the iron fetters, next to the noose itself, badges of dishonor, and drew back. "No, sheriff, no! in heaven's name don't ask me to let you put those on me!" I cried. "I will pledge you upon my honor that I will go to Garcia with you!"

"I am not figerin' on the honor of cut-throats now-days," he growled brutally; "hold out y'r hands!"

In that breath I struck him, and his bulk bounced against the iron wall and fell to the floor. It was my life-long weakness once more. Something like a cloud burst in my heart and set me insane. The officers sprang between us with lifted clubs. Marker got to his feet, brushing a red ooze from his temple.

"Tut! tut!" said one of the big fellows, a grin on his florid face. The other put his hand on Marker's shoulder and said laughingly: "You are most too brave, sheriff! Insults are poor things to tie young men with! I learned that long ago! Come, now, you've got no kick coming; he met you half way!" He patted Marker on the back. The latter looked both black and green, like a venom-bloated toad.

"Git out o' my way!" he roared, pushing against the officers. "I'll iron 'im or kill 'im!"

"Not quite, my man, not quite!" said the officer who had spoken first, turning with his outstretched hand against Marker's breast. Throwing back his head he looked the sheriff in the face. He was a kindly, royal-looking fellow. "You forget that the prisoner is a man, a gentleman, and maybe as decent and innocent as yourself, perhaps more so," he said. "Besides, the prisoner is still in New Orleans, and I happen to know of a thing that he did in this town, which for nerve and bravery, Mr. Sheriff, lays over everything, I imagine, that you ever did! Just stand back, now! I say you can't bulldoze him—not until you get him into the country!"

Marker fell off growling and chafing. The speaker turned to me with a smile. "It's tough, prisoner; every decent man hates to put such things on another," he said, persuasively. "But it is an officer's duty in such a case as this. It's not his fault; it's a hardship we all have to bear when we fall into the clutches of the law. Here are things, snap them on your wrists yourself, and I'll cover your hands with this coat so that no one can see."

I held out my hands. "You may put them on, sir," I said, "but not this man who has come for me! I call you to witness, gentlemen, that I am willing to go home and meet my accusers. I did not invoke the law's authority, but his brutality. Had it been my intention to escape the law I could have been on the other side of the world ere this. Mr. Marker, I hope you recognize the fact?"

An angry grunt rumbled up from his thick neck as he turned about, picking up my few belongings, and mopping a purple puff beneath his eye. "Come on," he growled.

We passed out and down the corridor. At the prison door a patrol wagon was waiting. In that we rattled away rapidly to the levee. Marker sat grim and dark by my side, his right hand in his coat pocket. We passed far along the levee to a small pier. By this lay a trading vessel, lightly built, with long, soft lines, and fitted with both steam and sails. I looked at Marker questioningly.

"Are we going in this boat?" I asked. "Yes, we are," he said in gruff fashion. "It is part of y'r father's property. I am goin' to take it to Garcia, and you in it. Any more questions?"

"None."

When we had gone over the side and stood on the neat, smooth deck, to my profound surprise, Lancewood Shirlaw came forward on a pair of crutches, and smilingly held out his hand.

"Ah, Mr. Stantree," he gurgled suavely, "permit me to welcome you aboard the Lady Marie! I anticipate great pleasure upon our voyage to your home!"

Here was the informer! My betrayer! I looked at him a moment in amazement and rage, then, feeling the futility of words I turned away.

This extraordinary story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. A lot of strange and exciting things happen. Read it. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you if you send in a week's subscription. It only costs $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

* * *

Fireplaces.

In the home of your great-grandmother the fireplace was not the little affair of our times. In the oldest house now standing in Rhode Island, the fireplace is ten feet long by four feet deep, the back and sides are made of stones laid by two feet thick, and the chimney is thirteen feet by six feet. Such a fireplace was an excellent playhouse for the colonial children when the fire was out and afforded them great delight at night when they watched the stars from their seat in the chimney-corner. Wouldn't the people of those times have laughed at the tiny bundles of kindling some of us buy at the store? The logs they burned were six feet in length and three or four feet in circumference. These were brought into the huge kitchen by the old white horse who dragged them behind him.

These great fireplaces not only warmed the people but cooked their food as well. The brick oven that was formed by one side of the fireplace was heated with brush and light wood, which soon roared briskly. In this pans of "pyes'n injun" bread were put when baking-day came around. Then the "Pandowdy" or great apple-pudding and the Indian pudding were placed in the front. While these were baking, two smaller tin ovens were brought in. These were called Dutch ovens, and were nothing more than sheets of metal curved into more than half a circle. The opening was placed toward the fire. A long iron rod ran through the oven from side to side, and on this the roasts were spitted. Perhaps a piece of beef was placed on one spit and a fat turkey on the other. A little daughter of the household always assumed the task of turning the spit so the meat was evenly roasted. After the meats were finished, pies—apple, mince, squash and pumpkin—were baked in the oven, and then in the ashes on the hearth potatoes and corn were roasted.

When one thinks of the fireplaces of those days one cannot help smiling at our tiny gas ovens where, in our tiny kitchens, the baking is done for our tiny families.

* * *

"A note to meet my girl at half past four, and it's quarter past now, and my landlady's in the kitchen!"

* * *

Mysterious Umbrella.

In the midst of a driving rainstorm one day recently the owner of a small store on a north side street corner was startled by the violent opening of the door and the sound of rushing feet, the Pittsburg Gazette-Times says. Hastily dropping the work she was doing in the rear room, she hurried toward the front of the store just in time to see the door slammed shut and a strange man running away at top speed. When she reached the door he had disappeared, but when she turned to investigate she was astonished to behold a handsome gold-handled silk umbrella, dripping with moisture, lying on the showcase.

Surprise, alarm and complete mystification were mingled. What possible explanation could there be of a stranger dashing into her place in the midst of a drenching downpour, leaving his fine umbrella without a word of explanation and rushing forth into the rain without it?

The more she thought about it the deeper grew the mystery. She related the incident to her customers. Not one of them could offer a plausible solution. She finally concluded the man was crazy, and she felt profoundly thankful that he had done no worse.

Then one day a second stranger appeared. He was almost as mysterious as the first. He produced a letter and handed it to the storekeeper. It was dated Chicago and read:

"Dear Tom:—I left your umbrella in the little store at the corner near your house. Just had time to grab a car, so failed to explain to storekeeper. Left it on showcase. Hope you recover it. O. K. Yours, etc. ——."

"Well, I declare!" was all the little storekeeper could gasp, as she produced the umbrella. "How simple it was, after all."

* * *

Gauntlet at Coronation.

There is still a king's champion or hereditary champion of England. It was once his duty to ride on his horse in full armor into Westminster hall at the beginning of the coronation banquet and three times to challenge formally to combat any person who disputed the sovereign's title to the throne. The champion flung his gauntlet down as he rode, the herald announced the challenge, and [illegible] On no occasion was any opposition offered. When the champion took the gauntlet up for the third time the sovereign drank to him from a golden cup, which was then handed to the champion, who drank to his sovereign and straightway became owner of the cup.

The last occasion on which the champion appeared in Westminster hall to execute this magnificent duty, or privilege, rather, was on July 19, 1821, at the coronation of George IV, when Henry Dymoke performed the ceremony on behalf of his father, the Rev. John Dymoke, rector of Scrivelsby, in Lincolnshire, who deemed the office incompatible with the functions of a clergyman.

The Dymokes of Scrivelsby court are still king's champions, but probably the discontinuance of the coronation banquet in Westminster hall is the reason why they no longer ride in splendor on a mission so splendid as the coronation of the kings and queens of England.

Since 1377 for certain the office has attached to the manor of Scrivelsby, when Sir John Dymoke claimed by virtue of his holding Scrivelsby in right of his wife to act as king's champion at the coronation of Richard II. The Marmions were formerly king's champions, and had been lords of both Scrivelsby and of Tamworth castle. Scrivelsby is situated in a beautiful park not very far from Horncastle. The present champion is Mr. Frank Seaman Dymoke.—London Graphic.

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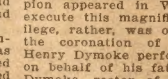

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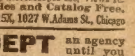

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Equipped For Travel.

Boston Maid (in Hub bookstore)—I am compelled to go to New York for an extended sojourn. Have you a New York guide?

Clerk—I regret to say, madam, that we have not.

Boston Maid—How unfortunate! Well, give me a dictionary of American slang.

A Forgiving Disposition.

She (with coldly cutting severity)—I learned from one of your old schoolmates today that you once wrote a most absurdly love-sick poem about a young girl, and it was published in the Hightone Magazine.

He—Y-e-s, my dear. The girl is now Mrs. Beefie.

"What! That big, fat, greasy thing with six children?"

"The same."

"Oh! Well, dearie, I don't mind."

The Quack's Last Remedy.

It is one mark of a quack, whatever school he may belong to, that he never admits his own ignorance. A "hedge doctor," a kind of quack in Ireland, was being examined at an inquest on his treatment of a patient who had died.

"I gave him ipecacuanha," he said.

"You might as well have given him the aurora borealis," said the coroner.

"Indade, yer honor, and that's just what I should have given him next, if he hadn't died."

Ye Street Car Conductor.

Street Car Motorman (mysteriously)—That young woman wot got in at Tenth street, and the other young woman wot got in at Eleventh street, is both company spotters. Look out fer y'rself.

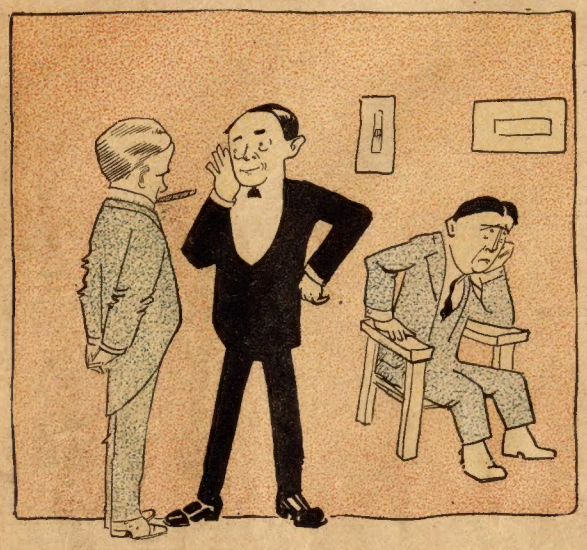
Conductor (confidentially)—That's all right. I'm engaged to both of 'em.

Cause for Regret.

Morrison—I bet the man who ran his automobile over Snodgrass is sorry.

Harrison—Why do you think so?

Morrison—Snodgrass was wearing a scarf pin that punctured the fellow's tire.



Jinks—He seems always to wear a bored look.
Binks—Yes—he talks to himself a great deal.

Properly Diagnosed.

Stranger—Doctor, I ache all over.

Doctor—Malaria, probably.

Stranger—And my head is all stuffed up, and I have a tearing cough.

Doctor—A little cold along with it, I see. Take——

Stranger—And I just feel as if this blankety-blank world was a rip-roaring old fraud, and I'd like to throw that miserable old grinning moon at the sun and stuff all the stars down somebody's throat.

Doctor—By Jove! You've got the grip.

Saving Space.

Miss Slimdiet—Here's an advertisement of "a literary man" who wants board. Does he say he's a literary man to show he's a person of refinement and culture?

Mrs. Slimdiet—No; it's to show that he can't pay much.

Father's Pun.

A young married pair have a child who has just reached the age when its hands are simply way stations to its mouth—things reaching the former being sure to reach the latter and in the shortest possible space of time.

The father of this infant is forced, for business reasons, to travel a great deal, and always has a mileage book on hand. This the youngster found one day and proceeded to devour.

When he was discovered he had used, alas, about 500 miles. The mother at once told her husband of the baby's destructiveness, and quick as a flash he responded:

"Really, my dear, don't you think that's going a little too far?"

Were Not on His List.

The late Rev. Horatio Stebbins of San Francisco was a man of large mind and noble powers, but more familiar with the world of intellectual and scholastic interests than with trivial and timely things.

His household was blessed with a charming daughter, who grew up tall and beautiful, commanding the admiration of all who saw her. One day a visitor said to the good doctor: "Doctor, your daughter grows more charming day by day. Why, she's a regular Gibson girl."

"Ah, thank you, thank you," replied the doctor in his best manner. When the visitor had gone, turning to his wife the doctor asked: "My dear, who are the Gibsons?"

Toward Mercy.

Jim had been far from a good boy during the day, and toward nightfall he realized the fact fully. Being well acquainted with the workings of family discipline, he essayed a little diplomacy.

"Shall you tell father about me?" he inquired of his mother.

"Certainly, I shall tell him," responded his mother, with sorrowful firmness.

"Shall you tell him before dinner or after dinner?" asked the culprit.

"After dinner," was the announcement.

"Mother," and Jim gave a wriggle of anticipation, "couldn't you have a blueberry pudding for his dessert? Couldn't you do that much for me, mother?"

Stern Necessity.

"I cannot live but a week longer wizout you."

"Foolish talk, duke. How can you fix upon a specific length of time?"

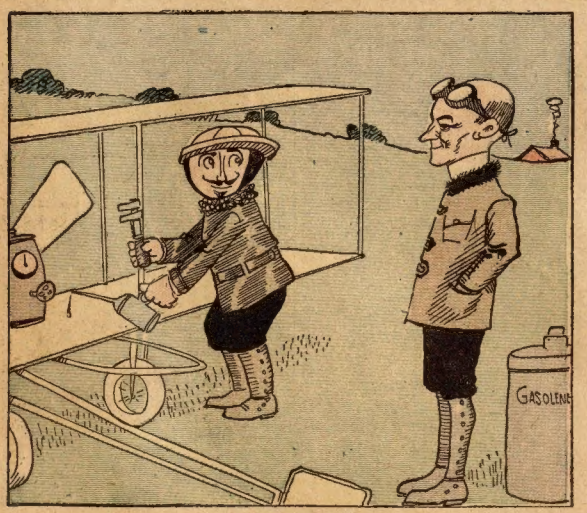
"Ze landlord fix on it, miss, not I."

Her Preference.

Although the songbird doth delight
The ears of many men,
The farmer's wife would rather hear
The cackle of the hen.

Citizen—Why don't you offer a reward for the men that robbed the bank?

Sheriff—Huh! If they knowed ther was any money in th' treasury they would come back and git that.



Flopper—They say that Bill Whizzer puts his aviation earnings into real estate all over the country.

Kerchug—Yep; you see he never knows where he's going to make a landing and he wants to make sure that he won't be sued for damages every time he comes down.

Just What He Would Like.

Hobo—Please gimme a nickel, ma'am?

Kind Lady—Didn't I see you coming out of a saloon a moment ago?

Hobo—I guess mebby you did, ma'am.

Kind Lady—Well, I wonder you are not ashamed to own it.

Hobo—I don't own it, ma'am. I only wish I did.

The New Fashion.

If you go to the ball or the opera you'll find
Of too many girls it is true,
As soon as she's out of short dresses, she wants
To get out of long dresses, too.

A Wrong Impression.

Fair Critic—Oh, Mr. Smear, those ostriches over there are simply perfect! You should never paint anything else but birds.

Artist (sadly)—Those are not ostriches, madam. They are angels.

The Devil Wins.

Minister—Now, Tommy, suppose you did something naughty, and were asked if you did it, what would you say?

Tommy—I dunno.

Minister—You don't know? Why, why! What would happen if you told a lie?

Tommy—The devil'd git me.

Minister—That's right. And what if you told the truth?

Tommy—I'd git th' devil.

Exercise Assured.

Doctor—Now that I've set your husband on his feet again, you must see that he gets more exercise.

Patient's Wife—All right, doctor; this bill of yours will help. He'll be terribly exercised when I show it to him.

Full Confidence.

She—You haven't any confidence in either candidate?

He—On the contrary, I have confidence in both. I believe all the things they say about each other.

The Truth Comes Out.

Mrs. Uppson—They tell me you keep boarders. Is it true?

Mrs. Downing—Certainly not. My boarders keep me.

Hopeless.

Mother—What are you doing, Harry?

Harry—I'm countin'. You told me when I got mad to count a hundred.

Mother—Yes, so I did.

Harry—Well, I've counted 237, and I'm madder'n when I started.

"May I have a lock of your hair, Herr Spitzbubspieler?"

"Of the next crop but two, miss. The rest are all promised."

Mixed but Emphatic.

"Since you got married you are late every morning," complained the boss.

"Well," explained the breathless clerk, "I have to button up the ashes, and shake down a shirt waist and carry out the furnace every morning."

Old and New Schools.

Modern Actor—I can't play in that piece. The role does not fit me.

Old-time Manager—I thought you were an actor.

Modern Actor—No, only a star.

An Unfailing Sign.

Wife (impatiently)—This new dress doesn't set well, and I know it.

Husband—What makes you think so?

Wife—It's too comfortable.

Utterly Unreasonable.

"Come along to bed, Ethel. I'm sure you wouldn't like to keep the Lord up all night, just to listen to your prayers."

Right Back at Her.

A young looking couple in a subway train seemed to be very much excited. They had boarded the train at 149th street and it became very evident at 14th street that conversation had assumed a serious phase. Just when several persons were edging over to them the woman shouted:

"Perhaps you are not aware that I had over a dozen proposals of marriage before I accepted yours."

Apparently dumfounded at the loud utterance, the man, not to be outdone, shouted back:

"And perhaps you are not aware that I proposed to nearly twenty women before I became acquainted with you."

Reliable.

"Congratulations, old man! How much does your new baby weigh?"

"A ton."

"Quit your kidding."

"Honestly, I'm a coal dealer and I weighed the boy on my own scales."

Superstitious.

"But why did she marry him?"

"Superstition, my dear. She noticed that she always won when she met him at a bridge party, so she took him as a mascot."

Good Schooling.

Blobbs—That girl has been remarkably successful.

Slobbs—Yes, she used to work in a nail factory, and now she's a manicure.

On the Beach.

Tom—She said if any man kissed her without warning she'd call the police.

Dick—What did you do?

Tom—Why, I warned her, of course.

Had to Invest.

"What cured him of flirting?"

"He started a flirtation with a lady who turned out to be selling an encyclopedia at $200 a set."

Practical Parents.

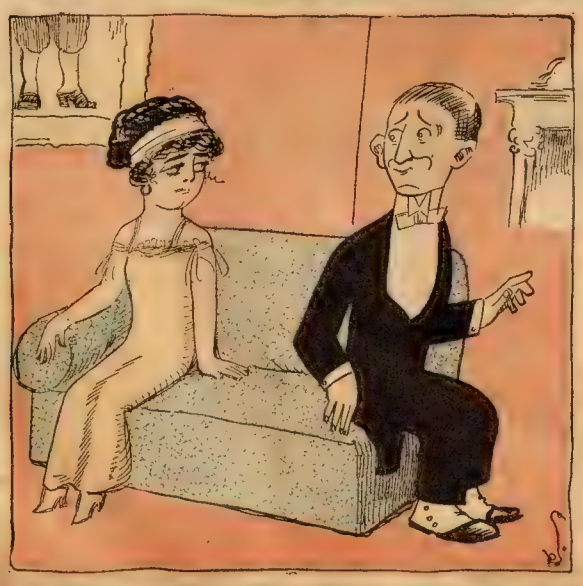
Anxious Mother—Our daughter hasn't touched an onion for a month.

Anxious Father—Then it's time to get a dog.

Took it Into the Ark.

"To whom shall we credit this anecdote?"

"Credit it to Noah. If he didn't write it he at least preserved it to posterity."



Chappy—Ah—have you ever seen a barn dawnce, Miss Wose?
Miss Rose—I have often seen you dance, Freddy.

His Lament.

"Gosh, I hate to see summer come," said the farmer.

"Why?"

"Coz all summer long ma dishes up a lot of stuff we can't eat ourselves jes' to let the city boarders think they're gettin' plain home cooking."

Table Talk.

Boarding House Keeper—There's a big duty on meat.

Boarder (at table)—Tough, isn't it, ma'am?

Fashion the Course.

"I understand Brindle and his wife have quarreled. What was the cause?"

"Why, Brindle lost his wife in the crowd and went about peeking under all the peach basket hats that looked like hers—and she saw him and got mad."

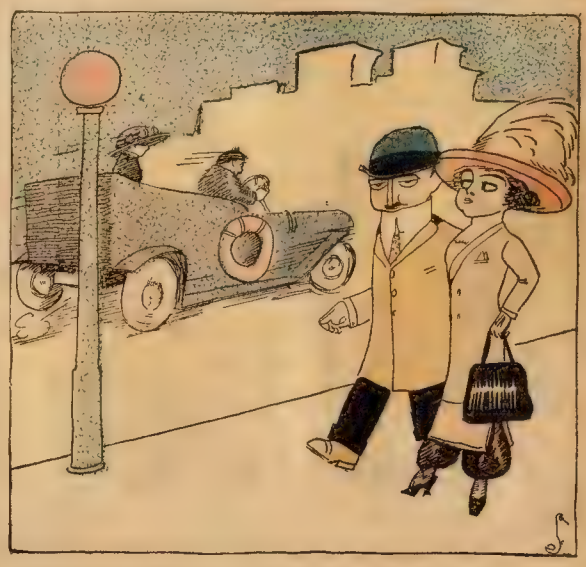
THE FEMININE JURY.

When women fill the jury rooms.
The rooms will change, you bet!
There'll be a charge of soap and brooms
And scrubbing brushes wet.
Then mirrors bright will line the wall,
And powder puffs galore,
With curling tongs and dressers tall
And gown hooks by the score.
But with it all we're more than sure
We'll never live to see
A woman jury popular—for
They'll always disagree.

No Choice.

"You say the elopement was sort of forced upon you."

"Yes; after she came down the rope ladder her father pulled it up."



Mrs. Wilkins—Henry, the doctor said I was going to get measles.
Mr. Wilkins—He did? He shouldn't be making rash promises.

A Qualified Acquaintance.

The fattest man in Manayunk was weighing himself a few days ago in the big market house in the suburb. A crowd of small boys gathered a short distance away from the scales and gazed at his girth with wondering eyes.

The fat man didn't like to be the center of interest, evidently, for he turned and said, gruffily:

"Hope you know me when you see me again."

As the boys took to their heels one of them hurled the parting shot:

"We will, mister, if some one doesn't stick a pin in you before we see you."

In the Skyscraper.

"And how did you happen to meet the brother you haven't seen for years?"

"By accident. He and I have had offices on the same floor for ten years without meeting each other. He goes home at 5 o'clock; I go at 5:05. He happened to be delayed five minutes looking for a missing umbrella and we met in the elevator."

Decrease and Increase.

Ansley (a visitor)—The population of your town seems to be smaller than it was ten years ago, when I was here before.

Staffiers (a resident)—It is smaller; ten years ago we had no doctors.

The Explanation.

Bride (sobbing)—Pa, Fred wasn't tender to me this morning!

Experienced Parent—I guess, then my dear, that the steak was tough.

Full Pay.

He—No, the boss doesn't pay me any more than I am worth.

She—How in the world do you manage to live on it?

Positive Knowledge.

Englishman—Have you any Dreadnoughts in America?

Yankee—Surely. I married one.

They tell us kind words never die,
When controversy rages high
In words unkind we likewise see
Remarkable longevity.

Patience.

Dr. Russell H. Conwell is a great believer in patience, and he recently told a story indicating what he believed to be an example of making a virtue of patience.

"A young man was standing at the gate, waiting for his sweetheart, and when at last she appeared he remarked kindly, 'What a time you have kept me waiting!'

"'Oh, dear me, how fussy you are,' she observed. 'Why, I didn't promise to meet you till 7:45 and it's only two minutes after 8 now.'

"'Ah, Mary, dear,' replied the young man, 'but you have made a slight mistake in the day. You were to have been here at 7:45 last evening. I have been waiting ever since.'"

Getting Signatures.

"How did Bliggins get all those signatures to his petition?"

"The unscrupulous villain purloined his daughter's autograph album."

No Spare Room.

"Do you live within your income?"

"I do, but I'm awfully crowded for space."

Rev. Slabsly Kalhoon—Der hab bin so menny buttons in de plate heah lately foh conterbushons foh de heathen dat I'se bound ter suggest dat de congugashun furnish some gyarments ter go wid 'em.

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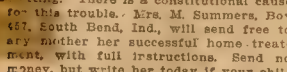

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The IRON TRUNK Mystery.

Keeney's Greatest Case

by J. Breckenridge Ellis.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

BEFORE Keeneyes could examine the mysterious cavity under the floor of the woodhouse, it would be necessary for him to have a light.

It was certain that some one had fired a pistol, down in that cellar-like place.

Also, the scream had told him unmistakably, that the bullet had lodged in some human being.

Possibly a desperate murderer, crouched below, waiting to assail him, should he venture into the depths.

To procure a lantern, it would be necessary to leave the woodhouse.

In that event, the murderer, if such there were, could escape.

Keeneyes, however, was not unprepared for this emergency. In his pocket he always carried for the time of greatest need, a small dark-lantern. He now pushed back the slide of this lantern, and shot a penetrating ray below. He moved a band of intense light back and forth, until every crevice of the cellar was minutely examined. The search revealed strange things; but at the same time, it assured him that it would be safe to descend.

He drew back involuntarily.

For this descent, there was nothing. How any one could reach the trap-door from the ground, some fifteen feet below the wooden flooring of the woodhouse, was a question. There were no steps. Keeneyes, however, thought of a way. The examination of the hole—for it was in reality more like a well, or rude hole, than a cellar—told the detective that nothing was to be feared in deserting the spot for a few moments.

Accordingly he ran to the house, secured the ladder from the diningroom, where all this time it had laid unnoticed, and brought it to the woodhouse. He inserted it through the opening, and found that there was a beam to support the upper end. In this manner, he swiftly descended to the floor of the well-like excavation

His light was held steadily upon a prostrate form lying upon this floor.

It was the form of a motionless man, and the man's body was bathed in his own blood.

A pistol was clenched in the rigid hand.

The man had committed suicide.

He was of perhaps forty-five or fifty years of age, dressed in ragged and soiled clothes. He, himself, was in an unkempt condition, and looked like a wandering outcast of society—a tramp.

There was a bullet hole in his breast. The bullet had penetrated his heart.

It was the duty of Keeneyes to give quick notification of this discovery, but first, he made a swift exploration of the cavern. His search was not very fruitful. The floor and walls were not built up, but had been left just as the excavation had been dug. The lower part of the room was of yellowish clay. It was evident that the ladders which Keeneyes had examined, had been stained by coming into contact with the floor or walls of this place.

That explained a detail of the mystery. But the tramp did not answer Amonia's description. His face and hands were not of a yellowish tinge.

Moreover, he utterly failed to bear out Howard Willis' impression of a "yellow being." His garments were not coated with yellowish stain. And yet, had this tramp long been confined in the place, he must have so stained both his skin and his clothing. From this, what was to be inferred?

Clearly, there were two tramps involved in the mystery.

Besides, this could not be the long-missing son of Giles Newton, for he was much too old to be that drunken and dissolute young man, whom the world had so long believed dead, but whom Keeneyes felt sure was at the bottom of the iron trunk mystery.

It was even possible, though not probable, that this dead man was in no way associated with the disappearance of Mrs. Willis

Having learned all that silent walls and a dead man could tell him, Keeneys quickly went up the ladder, and spread the news of his discovery.

Lumberburg was instantly electrified as if the very air had borne the news with the rapidity of live wires. The whole town except those who were bedridden, assembled about the woodhouse. The infinite relish manifested in the most trivial details of the affair showed how hungry the town was for a sensation; and now that they had a sensation all of their own, involving mystery, murder and disappearance, nothing could exceed the eagerness of the inhabitants. It was as if, having waited all their civic existence for the great opportunity, and having prepared for it, they were now ready to sieze upon it, and suck out its very marrow.

Mrs. Willis was gone—possibly kidnaped, or worse still, perhaps murdered.

A secret cave had been dug under the woodhouse, unknown to the oldest inhabitant, and, in this cave, a tramp had voluntarily rid the world of the expense of his maintenance.

The iron trunk had miraculously vanished, if Howard Willis was to be given credence, then had again returned to its wonted place.

A Yellow Being had entered the bedroom mysteriously.

A ladder stained with yellow had been found in the distant woods.

An owl had been heard to utter sounds as if through a human throat.

Best of all, nobody knew, as yet, how to account for any of these things.

Even Keeneyes rubbed his hands with secret satisfaction.

He felt that he had, at last, come upon a mystery that was indeed a mystery. He unhesitatingly pronounced it—to himself, be it understood—as his greatest case, his biggest mystery.

Of course, to the populace he did not let it appear as if he were in any degree baffled. All the same, he knew nothing of the vital point, namely—the hiding-place of Mrs. Willis, and her condition.

But Keeneyes had one advantage over everybody; a sudden thought had flashed upon his mind—a supposition that might lead to full revelations. On the part of the populace, there had been no such flash.

CHAPTER XXVII.

As soon as the idea had flashed upon the mind of the detective, he hurried to the house.

In the meantime the coroner had summoned his jury to hold an inquest, for by this time, it was dawn.

The body of the suicide was carried into the Willis home, since it had been found in the Willis woodhouse, and was the body of an unknown man.

Howard Willis, himself, while deeply perplexed over the discovery of a hidden cellar under his woodhouse, was too much agitated over his wife's disappearance, to busy his mind much with the matter. He could not think the tramp, who had shot himself under his woodhouse, had anything to do with his wife's disappearance. In the first place, he was not of that yellowish color which had so terrified him in the appearance of the midnight intruder.

Again, if it were the tramp, and if this tramp had carried off his wife, where was his wife? She could certainly have been carried not farther than the woodhouse; if the dead man had abducted her, surely she would have been found in the cellar.

Again, if the tramp knew anything of the night's tragedy, why had he killed himself? There was no evidence in the cellar, or upon him, to convict him.

Strange as was this existence of a cave under the woodhouse, and of the presence of a tramp in that cave, Howard did not believe there was any connection between the mystery, and that of his "Yellow Being."

In the meantime, Keeneyes had eluded all eyes, and now found himself upstairs in the bedroom. It was not likely that he would be interrupted here. The dead tramp lay below; and all who could get into the house, had no other desire but to gaze upon the mysterious corpse, or at least, if unable to enter the room, at any rate, to get as close to it as possible.

Keeneyes, therefore felt safe from disturbance.

Having cursorily examined the apartment again, for perhaps the hundredth time, without avail, the detective went to the iron trunk.

Howard Willis had maintained unequivocally, and with perfect sincerity, that as he lay upon his bed, staring at this trunk, or at least in this direction, he had suddenly become aware of the fact that the trunk was not there.

For the trunk to disappear—if indeed, Howard had not been dreaming, or hypnotized by his so-called "Yellow Being,"—it must either have risen upward, and gone out through the roof, after the manner of approved spiritual table-removals, or it might have been depressed through the flooring of the bedroom.

Keeneyes scrutinized the bed as he held his face on a level with the lid of the trunk, and found that if the trunk had been depressed by so much as two feet, it would have vanished from the range of vision of any one lying prone upon the bed.

Keeneyes could not suppose that the trunk had really gone through the floor into the diningroom, then reascended: it was too heavy, too big, too substantial. But there was the possibility that it might have been depressed [illegible] and a half, or two feet, [illegible]

This could have been [illegible] the manipulation of some secret spring.

Keeneyes had never been able to find

any spring in the bottom of the trunk, it now occurred to him for the first time that the reason he had found no such spring was because no such spring existed

But if the bottom of the trunk did not move up or down, how could the "Yellow Being" have passed from the ladder in the diningroom, into the bedroom above it? Keeneyes had not been able to detect the slightest proof of a trap-door under the bottom of the iron trunk. If no such trap-door existed, how could the trunk be entered?

If it had been depressed two feet, what could have been the object of such a change of position? Evidently not to frighten Howard, who was sufficiently frightened by the "Yellow Being." Evidently not to mystify him who was already at his wits ends!

If the depression had truly been made, might it not have been for the purpose of entering the bedroom?

But how could the lowering of the trunk have opened such a way?

Only upon the supposition that there was an opening in the side of the trunk near its bottom, and that this side, or rather the lowest section of this side, having opened, gave egress to the space between the ceiling of the diningroom and the flooring of the bedroom. How thick was the space between these two planes? Was there enough room under the floor for a man to lie concealed? If so, might not the "Yellow Being" at that very moment be hidden under the floor of the bedroom, that is to say, just above the ceiling of the diningroom?

Keeneyes climbed into the huge trunk, and seated himself upon the bottom. He began systematically to press his thumb upon every square inch of space along the four sides, next to the floor. He was seeking that secret spring which his reasoning led him to believe must exist. Hitherto he had looked for such a spring principally on the bottom of the trunk. To be sure he had, in a way, investigated the entire interior and exterior surfaces; yet with no such minuteness.

His labor was in vain.

However, Keeneyes had provided for this failure. He climbed out, and sought a chisel and ax which he had carried upstairs with him. He began to remove the carpet from about the trunk; and when the floor was bared, he began prying up the planks next to the trunk. He was resolved to put his own mind to rest, relative to this unknown space under the floor. He had the first rays of the morning sun to guide him. They entered the window which had been so mysteriously entered by the "Yellow Being," and fell upon the floor at his knees.

Keeneyes crouching low, pulled up the plank which he had succeeded in loosening. As he drew it back, he peered into the space between floor and subfloor.

He drew back, involuntarily.

The rosy beams of the morning sun rested upon a human hand, which, thus brightly revealed in the gloom of the space under the floor, seemed detached and remote, a single human hand, floating in semi-gloom.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

For awhile, Keeneyes knelt motionless upon the bared floor, staring at the hand under the raised plank, as the sunlight revealed it.

The hand was small and white.

It was the hand of a woman.

Was it the hand of a dead woman?

Possibly, it belonged to Mrs. Willis, the missing wife.

Keeneyes looked intently, but the hand did not stir.

Then he reached down, and took it in his own.

He felt an involuntary motion, and at the same time, he found that the hand was soft and warm. The hand tried to draw away, but did not do so.

Why?

The reason became at once apparent. Under the floor was a woman; and this woman was heavily bound; a sheet knotted about her waist, held her arms stiffly to her sides.

Keeneyes quickly pryed up several more planks, and then plainly revealed the woman to the morning sunlight.

He sought her face anxiously.

Yes, it was the wife of Howard Willis.

"Mrs. Willis!" cried the detective. "Are you injured?"

There was no reply.

"Ah," muttered Keeneyes angrily, "they have gagged her!"

Not without some difficulty he removed a gag which had been carefully prepared, doubtless some time before the invasion of the bedchamber.

Mrs. Willis uttered a moan, and struggled to free herself.

"One moment, madam," cried Keeneyes, and he swiftly liberated her, and helped her out of the cramped recess.

Her clothing was heavy with dust from the place of her concealment, and her face was pale from insufficient air; above all, her eyes were wild from her terrible experiences. About her was wrapped the dress which Amonia had missed.

At first she did not recognize the detective, and when she did, she uttered no words of gratitude, but of inquiry—"My husband? Where is Howard?"

"Do not be uneasy, Mrs. Willis," said Keeneyes, assisting her to a chair. "Mr. Willis is out in town, even now, hunting for you."

"Oh!" moaned the other. "Let some one go for him." Then she burst into uncontrollable sobs.

Keeneyes ran downstairs and drew Amonia to one side, and told her what had happened.

"Bring Mr. Willis as soon as possible," he said, "but don't spread the news, just yet, for the neighbors would crowd into the room, and be in the way."

Amonia drew a sunbonnet upon her head, and dashed out of the house.

Keeneyes returned to the room, and found Mrs. Willis leaning back in the chair, with a bloodless face.

"Mrs. Willis," he urged, "tell me at once if you have been seriously injured, or if I shall call the physician?"

"No, no, no," she answered nervously, "it was the horrible fright—but are you sure my husband is safe?"

"Perfectly safe. Amonia will bring him soon. Don't try to talk till he comes. Try this smelling-salts—some of my own—I always carry it for such conditions. How is that? Thank you. Feel better? I thought you would. Fright isn't lasting. You're in the open air, now—see the cheerful sunshine?"

"Ah, but that dreadful iron trunk!" groaned Mrs. Willis, as her wandering eye caught sight of it. "That hideous iron trunk!"

"Be calm," coaxed Keeneyes. "Look at me. Am I excited? I think not. Then be calm. I think I see your husband coming up the street. Ah! how he is running! He is overjoyed, perfectly mad with delight. Now, he'll get you excited again—I'd better stop him—"

Mrs. Willis sprang to her feet, and rushed from the room, to meet her husband.

Down stairs she flew as light as air, in spite of her long terror and confined position. As she reached the hall opposite the parlor, her husband opened the front door.

He called her name in delirious joy.

His wife would have replied, but her eyes had been startled by the men standing in the parlor about a stretcher. On this stretcher was the corpse of the tramp, his breast bathed with blood.

Mrs. Willis fell into the arms of her husband, who, with the assistance of Keeneyes, helped her to a hall-seat.

After the recovery, they went upstairs to escape the gruesome details of the inquest.

"Not in there," cried Mrs. Willis shrinking back from the bedroom door. "I will never sleep in that room again, as long as I live. I will never enter it, except to secure my possessions. I know the conditions of our owning this place require us to sleep beside the iron trunk. But I will never do it again. I'll leave the house forever, first."

"We are poor," said Howard, firmly, "but I fully agree with you. We will go out of this place, though he have no other home. I am young and strong, and, once in a while, I get a lawsuit. I am independent. I'll never room with that hideous trunk again."

"My dear friends," said Keeneyes, as they entered another room and sank exhausted upon a couch, while Mrs. Willis examined Howard's bruises, "You make a sad mistake. This place belongs to you—"

"But not unless we sleep with the iron trunk!" cried Howard

"Well, then, sleep with it," said Keeneyes in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Never! I tell you, never! I'll sleep out upon the bare ground, first," cried Mrs Willis, hysterically

"And that is where you are wrong," Keeneyes answered, soothingly. "As your husband says, you have no other home. A lawsuit now and then can do little to keep the rain off you heads. You can not afford to board. But here is a house, here are commodious grounds—a garden, a—a woodshed—"

"I hate this place," exclaimed Howard.

"And I am afraid of it," added Mrs. Willis.

"But," Keeneyes explained, "that is where you are wrong."

"Mr. Zellers," exclaimed the lady, "I am tired of hearing you say that I am wrong."

"Then get right," returned Keeneyes "That is the reasonable thing to do, under all circumstances. Get right. Why be wrong? And you know it is wrong to fear any inanimate thing. Can the house hurt you? Can an iron trunk bite you? Can the woodhouse devour you in its secret cellar?"

"It's secret cellar?" ejaculated Mrs Willis. "Merciful powers! What do you tell me?"

"Oh, yes," returned Keeneyes, easily, "there has been a secret cellar under your woodhouse all the time, and that is where the poor fellow, now down stairs, shot himself in the heart. But the cellar is inanimate; it cannot devour you, any more than the trunk could bite."

"I don't know what the trunk could do," said Mrs. Willis, with a shudder.

"It could do nothing, because it is only a trunk," replied Keeneyes. "But let me tell you, Mrs. Willis—yes, and Mr. Willis, too; let me tell you, that whether you sleep in this house, or not, whether on the bare ground, as you anticipate, or not, whether in hotel, boardinghouse or private dwelling, you will be in precisely the same danger that you are in, when beside the iron trunk. It is not trunk, but the man who manipulates that trunk, whom you have to fear."

"And this man—"

"Is the son of your cousin Giles Newton, whom you have all this time believed murdered in a drunken brawl. Your cousin Giles, that old fox, left you this house in order to place you at his son's mercy. The hatred of the feud burned in his bosom. You thought he meant you a kindness—after living in the same town with you and never speaking to you in your life! No! He meant your ruin."

"But how? Where is this missing son? How does he manipulate the trunk?"

"By this time, Mrs. Willis, you should be sufficiently recovered to tell us all that happened last night."

"All that happened? Horrors! How can I recall it? Everything was so sudden, so confused."

"Let us begin, then, when all was not sudden, and not confused. When you and your husband left me, last night, you went to the bedroom, expecting no suddenness and no confusion."

"Certainly."

"You went to sleep?"

"Soundly."

"Very good. There is a point to start from. Now, while you were asleep, you were not confused. Excellent. Then you were asleep; and you had no presentiments of evil, and you had no bad dreams."

"How do you know that?"

"Because you say you slept soundly."

"That is true."

"Good. Then you are soundly asleep, peacefully asleep. But you awake."

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Willis with a shudder.

"Yes, you do not continue to sleep soundly. Now, what is it that wakes you up, since you have no presentiments of evil?"

"I felt my wrist grasped violently. It was my husband who had caught hold of me."

"That woke you up?"

"Yes, and I was frightened by his convulsive grasp, and more so because he did not say one word to me."

"Then, did you get up?"

"Not entirely. I started to rise, with my eyes fastened upon Howard's face—there was a light in the room. I saw he was frightened. Then I saw that he was pointing toward the iron trunk. A terrible horror took possession of me."

"Ah, yes," groaned the detective, "that's the trouble. And so you saw nothing calmly. If I had only been in your place!"

"I wish you had been," returned Mrs. Willis, with some spirit.

"But what did you see? Mrs. Willis, what did you see?"

"The trunk had disappeared."

"The iron trunk?"

"Of course. Is there any other?"

"Did it go down through the floor?"

"I know nothing, except that it was gone. I tell you, it was gone. It had vanished as completely as if it had been a ghost."

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"It wasn't there, then," said Keeneyes, drily.

Mrs. Willis made no response.

"Well," said Keeneyes, trying to swallow his disappointment over this useless bit of testimony, "and is that all that you saw?"

"My husband pointed to one of the windows. I looked, and saw that it was open. We had securely bolted it. It was too much. I fainted dead away."

"During your faint, which you call a dead faint, I presume you were blank to the world?"

"I was entirely unconscious."

"Then let us pass over that till the time you recovered."

"When I came to my senses, I was lying gagged, and bound, and almost suffocated, under the floor where you saw me. People tramped over the floor, deafening me. The dust was suffocating, but I could not cry out. Then after an agony of wretched waiting, you found me."

"Yes, I saved your life," said Keeneyes. "Nobody but me would ever have looked under the floor for you. My reason told me you were there, or, if you were not, that your abductor was. Have you now told me everything you know?"

"Yes, everything."

"This is a great mystery," said Keeneyes in a low voice, speaking with grave conviction.

CHAPTER XXIX.

The detective left Mr. and Mrs. Willis, and returned to the bedroom.

He carefully examined the iron trunk anew, then the space under the floor, left exposed by the upraised planks.

He was not satisfied, but removed plank after plank, until all the flooring about the iron trunk had been taken up.

In doing so, he made a discovery.

This discovery consisted in the existence of a wire which ran along the under side of the flooring. It seemed to penetrate the iron trunk, although when looking into the trunk, he could not detect its presence.

Having found one termination at the edge of the bottom of the trunk, he followed the wire along the space under the floor, till it disappeared through the ceiling of the diningroom, near the edge of the room. Evidently this wire descended into the room below.

Keeneyes drove his ax through the ceiling at the point of disappearance, thereby causing a bit of plastering to fall below. Then he rose, hurried downstairs, and looked up at the ceiling. The place he had marked was nowhere near the spot where the ladder had stained the wall of the diningroom.

Undiscouraged by this fact, Keeneyes, carried the ladder to the new point and was able, by doing considerable damage to the wallpaper and plastering, to follow the wire down to the floor. It disappeared through the floor.

Keeneyes went outdoors, and sought by means of crawling under the house. He found that a cellar window opened directly under the house. Having crept under the floor of the ground story, by that means, he felt his way to the diningroom. The wire was plainly exposed to view, running down from the floor and disappearing in the ground.

Evidently to follow the wire would be a work of time.

Keeneyes began digging with his ax, but was pleased to find that the wire lay only a few inches below the surface of the ground. He exhumed it for a little distance, found its direction, and stopped with a sudden exclamation.

The direction was that of the woodhouse.

Possibly the wire extended to the mysterious cave, under the woodhouse.

At any rate, it would be much quicker work to go there to investigate, than to dig up the wire.

Keeneyes hurried to the woodhouse, and having descended into the cellar looked for any bit of wire projecting through the sides of the excavation. He believed he remembered having seen a piece of rusted metal to which he had paid no attention, on finding the dead body.

Yes, here was something looking like an iron scrap, stuck against the yellowish clay of the side.

Keeneyes pulled on this iron bar, and it came toward him, at the same time drawing a wire out of the earth. He was able to pull about two feet of wire toward him, then it would come no farther. Keeneyes pushed the iron bar, and the wire returned out of sight with a violent jerk that pulled the iron out of his hand.

Keeneyes smiled.

He pulled the iron bar as hard as he could, and, leaving the wire exposed, and dangling from the side of the cellar, he climbed out by means of the ladder, hurried to the house, and went upstairs. He sought Mr. and Mrs. Willis.

"If you two will lie on the bed," he cried, in triumph, "I will make the trunk disappear."

"I'll never lie on that bed again," Mrs. Willis declared.

"Besides," said Howard, "the last thing I'd like to see, is to see that horrible trunk do anything. It seems to me I'd go mad, if it disappeared again, as it did last night."

"But, my dear sir," cried Keeneyes, when he had swallowed his disgust over this lack of professional interest, "do you not see that if I can make the trunk disappear, I can show you how your 'Yellow Being" made it disappear and thus, you will no longer be bowed down under the mystery of not knowing how it vanished?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Howard.

"Well," cried Keeneyes; "does light dawn?"

"I will go with you," said Howard.

They entered the hall and the detective opened the door of the bedroom. "Look," he said.

Howard looked, and perceived that the trunk was about two feet lower than ordinarily.

Keeneyes looked at Howard in proud expectation, but did not receive the encomiums he expected.

"I don't understand this," said Howard, entering the room, "but I do see that while the trunk is lower than it was, you've made a hitch in trying to cause it to disappear."

"I make a hitch?" exclaimed Keeneyes, impatiently.

"Certainly. I don't understand how you've lowered the trunk; but I do know, as you see for yourself, that it is still there. And last night it disappeared. You can't claim that a thing has disappeared, when it is staring you right in the face."

Keeneyes laughed somewhat scornfully.

"Well?" Howard demanded briefly; "has it disappeared?"

"It's disappeared as much as it did last night," the detective told him. "If you were yonder lying upon the bed, as I wanted you and your wife to do, in order to have the experiment complete, you'd have thought that the trunk had disappeared. From your pillow, you could not now see the trunk. From your bed you would therefore, on not seeing it, have supposed that it had disappeared bodily. Your attention was attracted from the trunk to what you call the 'Yellow Being,' and the lamp was overturned, so you had no chance to prove if the trunk had altogether vanished."

"There is something in that," Howard admitted.

"Something in it?" repeated Keeneyes. "There's all in it that it can hold. There's everything in it. Now that trunk was lowered by my pulling a wire down in the secret cellar under your woodhouse. Whenever the man whom you call the 'Yellow Being' wanted the trunk lowered, he would go to that cellar and pull the wire."

"I suppose you are right."

"You suppose so? Good. I thank you. Well, to get to the wire, he would have to get down in the cave, and to do that he must have a ladder, and so every time, he'd get your ladder, and every time he used it, it would rest upon the clayey ground, first one end, then another—that explains the disappearance of your ladder, the yellow stains on it, the overturning of your flowerstand, the disappearances of your cages and birds and whatnot—"

"How so?" interrupted Howard.

"And the raising of the trunk lid," added Keeneyes, "and the disappearance of your wife, and the raising of your window after it was bolted, and—"

"But I don't understand."

"That is very probable. I will explain. When the trunk is lowered, as it is now, by means of pulling yonder wire under your woodhouse, it evidently makes entrance into the trunk possible. Let us examine."

Keeneyes went to the trunk, and raised the lid. He said:

"This trunk has been lowered to a level with the ceiling of the diningroom. Evidently the lowering of it must change the spring. I have never been able to find a spring in this trunk. But conditions must be changed, else why the folderol of changing its position?"

Keeneyes bent down, and sought for the hidden spring.

"Ah," he cried, "I have it, I have it! Look, Mr. Willis! Here is an opening in the side—by this means, your wife was thrust into the diningroom. Excellent!"

Howard Willis looked cautiously into the trunk. The floor was swinging down upon concealed hinges, and part of the side had opened, revealing the space under the flooring of the bedroom.

"Thus it was," said Keeneyes in triumph. "Thus it was!"

"But you have forgotten, Mr. Zellers, that our room was entered while you yourself were directly beneath this floor. If this villain came up through the trunk while you were in the diningroom, holding the ladder in your hands, how did he reach the ceiling without your discovering him?"

"Nothing easier to explain than that Your 'Yellow Being' had resolved upon his masterstroke of carrying off your wife, and, to make everything certain, he gained this space under the flooring, and lay there concealed until the fatal moment. Of course I was below, in the diningroom; he expected me to be there, or up here in the bedroom; but as he lay between floor and floor, so to speak, he had nothing to fear from me. Therefore he was waiting for his supreme endeavor, which was nothing more nor less than to put your wife bound and gagged under the floor, as I found her, and leave her there to perish, or be ransomed."

Howard uttered a cry of horror.

"And so," continued Keeneyes, "at the appointed time, this villain entered your room through the trunk, unfastened the bedroom window, then struck you unconscious, and deposited your wife as described."

"There is still another difficulty," Howard said, after reflection. "If the son of Cousin Giles Newton was really lying under the floor, waiting for Zadie and me to fall asleep, how could he manipulate the trap-doors in the trunk to get into it, if the wire that opens it must be worked from the cellar under the woodhouse?"

"Your Cousin Giles Newton's son had his accomplice in that cellar, waiting for midnight," said Keeneyes, with conviction. "That accomplice was the tramp who now lies dead in your parlor. He pulled the wire—the mover of the conspiracy did his work, then burst from the window, and escaped. But the tramp was left in the cellar without any means of getting out, since the ladder was in the diningroom. His ally was gone. He waited there—probably heard the shouts of searchers. At last he heard me uncovering the floor of his retreat. He listened till he knew I was about to take him like a rat in a trap. He heard my voice as I called to other searchers, and possibly recognized the tones of Keeneyes. His accomplice had deserted him. What could he do? He shot himself. He died. And yet, the one most criminal, because the inventor of the plot, escaped."

"You told me," said Howard, "that you found a ladder out in the woods."

"Yes," said Keeneyes, "and that reveals a very interesting feature of the case. Since I had taken possession of your ladder, the son of Giles Newton knew that when he came to escape, he must have another. He accordingly procured another, and placed it in the cave in the care of our tramp who is now dead, and whom we may refer to as X. At midnight, or about that time, X climbs out of his well, by means of this ladder, carries it to your bedroom window, and that Giles Newton's son may have that means of descent, after his crime. Then our X goes back to his well, or cave, or cellar, and drops to the bottom—a heavy fall, no doubt, on the yellowish clay, but a million times easier than to get out again."

"So you think the villain—my villain—got away by that ladder?"

"I am sure of it. And having reached the ground, he was resolved not to leave the ladder against the window. And why? Because he wished it to be an absolute mystery as to any one being in the room, that is to say, any human being. When he struck you he supposed you had seen nothing, or at least nothing to aid you—in which he was right. So he carried the ladder to the woods. You will say this was unnecessary and dangerous on his part."

"Yes, it seems unnatural and silly," Howard admitted. "Everybody would know that it was a human being who carried off my wife."

"You didn't seem to know it," remarked Keeneyes, "with your talk about a 'Yellow Being'—though you should have known that his color came from living and sleeping in a room of clay."

"Of course I was mystified, I admit."

"Yes, you were. But to return to the point. You say, for this escaped criminal to hamper his flight by carrying off the ladder, was unnatural and silly. I admit it was silly, but I claim it was natural. And in doing so I claim what may be said of most human actions."

"Why was it natural?"

"Because in every great crime, my experience—which is vast—teaches me that always one act of weakness may be discovered. Now, this son of your cousin Giles, had the idea that no one should know how he got into or out of the room. So he carried off the ladder. But that was not all. His ally, our friend X, was down in the cave. Since I had taken possession of the ordinary ladder, another must be at hand when needed. By having this second ladder concealed under the bushes your cousin Giles' son would be ready at the first chance to hasten to the rescue of our X. It was not the wisest thing he could have done, but he did it. When a thing's done there's nothing to be gained by saying it isn't reasonable."

"And so," exclaimed Howard, "after all, this villain has escaped, and our

lives are in as great danger as ever."

"I would hardly leave the case in such a state," returned Keeneyes, with a smile, as he closed the trunk and seated himself upon it. "While in the woods, examining the ladder, I heard cries like an owl. What do you suppose that meant?"

"It meant an owl, I suppose."

"Your supposition does not prove a very wise one. It meant that your cousin Giles' son heard me, and thought possibly X had escaped by some means and had come to join him. I did not hoot back. Your cousin Giles' son (whom you call the 'Yellow Being') found his mistake, and I heard him no more."

"But if you had answered him," Howard complained, "you might have lured him to you, and thus laid hands upon him."

"Ah, yes, without doubt. But your Cousin Giles Newton's son was not just then in a state to tempt me to the luring. I might have laid hands upon him, yes. Thank you."

"Then he is gone?"

"Oh, I have telegraphed his yellowish description to the only possible points of escape. He will be taken, which will suit me much better than to take him single-handed. That is, he will be taken if he doesn't imitate X, and kill himself. I rather think he'll kill himself. He is naturally of a wild and fierce disposition, and that would suit him better than life-imprisonment."

"I should be much easier in my own mind," Howard admitted. "And so you are sure he'll be captured, dead or alive?"

"Absolutely sure."

"If you are right in all this prophecy, and explanation of the mystery——"

"I am right," said Keeneyes, simply.

(He was right.)

"Then," said Howard with a sigh, "I'll still have to give up this house, for my wife declares she'll never sleep in this room with that iron trunk. There'd be no use to argue with her. The sight of the trunk would weigh more to her than a five-pound treatise on Logic."

"Aha!" smiled Keeneyes. "My dear friend, that is easily remedied. The house would go to you anyway, trunk or no trunk, since you are nearest of kin to your estimable, but I fear unlamented, cousin Giles."

"But there was a will."

"Break it."

"How?"

"Find the flaw in it, and crack it open, wide open."

"His mind was certainly unsound," said Howard, "so, it will be remembered, was a lawyer."

"Certainly. The will conditioned you always to sleep by that iron trunk. We now know that there was incredible malice in this condition. It was in order to give his son a chance to murder you, perhaps, or, as it was on account of an old feud, we should say, to retaliate upon you. But before Giles Newton's son could arrive, you married. That son decided to take out his revenge upon your wife. His accomplice, our X, possibly the man who wrote the spurious funeral notices, came with him. Now, when you show that the condition of the will was conditioned for the purpose of making way with you, or, in some way destroying your happiness, it will no doubt be concluded that your cousin Giles either had an unsound mind, or a very ill-natured one, and so—take out your iron trunk if you desire; as for me, I could have no better bed-fellow. I should like to own that trunk. But your wife feels differently, as, perhaps, mine would, in the premises. Take it out, therefore, post it up, fasten up your trap-doors, fill in your mysterious cellars, and be happy."

In these explanations and forecasts, the detective was correct.

The iron trunk was sold as old iron. The will was broken.

Howard and his wife were happy.

The end.

Clark Disciplined.

Champ Clark, now Speaker of the House of Representatives, is genuinely religious. Not that he is ostentatious about it, but it's a part of him. He lives it. He became a member of the Campbellite Church very early in life and thereby hangs a tale.

While still a young man he went to the town of Louisiana, Mo., to establish himself. The town was a lusty, bustling, typical Mississippi River town, of the steamboat era, and there was a good deal of life there in which Mr. Clark became a factor. Evening parties to take moonlight trips up and down the river were very much in vogue and one evening the young lawyer went up the river on one of these parties which had chartered a barge called the Mamie, in tow of the river steamer War Eagle. There was dancing all the way up the river and back, and Mr. Clark, in the youthful exuberance of his spirits, was one of the gay throng.

When the next Sunday rolled around and young Clark went as usual to the Campellite Church, where, a few weeks previous, he had put in his letter from the church he had belonged to back East, his case was called up, and after a swift but formal trial before services at the bar of the church he was ignominiously expelled from membership. Chagrined, humiliated and crestfallen, young Clark wandered forth in a despondent mood, but after walking around for a time he returned, reentered the church, took his seat in a rear pew and sat attentive during the sermon. As was the custom in the Campbellite Church, an invitation was extended by the pastor at the end of the sermon for repentant sinners to come forward and kneel at the chancel.

When this invitation was extended Champ Clark solemnly arose, marched forward to the mourners' bench, and, to the astonishment of the congregation, took his place with the penitents. The pastor and the church authorities were temporarily at their wits' end to know what to do with the repentant brother who only that morning had been expelled from the congregation. But a hurried consultation resulted in the unanimous conviction that there was absolutely no course open to them except to embrace the erring and repentant brother, and receive him back to fellowship.

A Gem of Letter Writing.

This letter from Joel Chandler Harris to the little daughter at boarding school shows that our present-day practitioners in the primitive and the whimsical have still a great deal to learn. Lewis Carroll or Sydney Smith might have written the letter, but it is hard to see how they could have improved upon it:

Dear Tommus (it begins): There was once an old man who had a little daughter off at school—away off; yes, it was most 200 miles; and he was so mean that he forgot to give the poor child any pin money when she started. Yes, he was meaner than that. After she got there he forgot to send her any money, and the poor child didn't have so much as a copper with which to buy peanuts and store candy. This little girl was so fat and patient that she never asked for any money, and so the mean old man who was her father pretended to himself that this was a good excuse for not sending any. But his conscience had teeth like a mouse and it kept gnawing away in his bosom, until at last he fixed up a check and sent it in a letter like this. It seems funny, too, but the check was just like the one I am sending today, and I think the same name was signed to it. Still, I think the little girl was partly to blame. Why couldn't she ax her pa to send her some money? When a man is old and mean he needs to be reminded of a good many things.

Next Best Thing.

"Have you ever thought that you would care to marry a man with a title," he asked.

"Really," she replied, pretending to make light of it, "I have never thought much about it."

"Still, I suppose if a man with a title were to come along you would not treat him coldly merely because he happened to have a handle to his name?"

"Well, I have no doubt that there are some very good men who possess titles."

"Let us suppose, for instance, that I had a title."

"I can't imagine such a thing."

"But if such a thing could be?"

"I hardly know what you mean."

"Why, if I had a title and came to you with a proposal of marriage, would you be disposed to listen to me kindly?"

"But you haven't any title, and you are never likely to have one."

"You are mistaken. I have a title."

"Silly! Why do you say that?"

"It's a fact. I've been appointed a colonel on the governor's staff."

"Why can't you be serious?"

"I am serious. I'll show you my commission if you wish to see it."

"Do you get a salary for being a colonel on the governor's staff?"

"No, but I have the right to wear a splendid uniform at public functions."

"O, Harry! Did you really mean it when you proposed a moment ago?"

A New Method.

A Berlin inventor has recently designed a simple device for the felling of trees, says the London Telegraph. The trunks are cut by the friction of a steel wire about one millimeter in diameter, which, as demonstrated by practical tests, is able to cut through a tree about twenty inches (fifty centimeters) in thickness in six minutes. The wire, which is carried to and fro by an electric motor, is heated by friction on the tree to such an extent as to burn through the timber, the result being a cut which is both smoother and cleaner than that effected by saw.

The wire will work satisfactorily on the thickest trees without the insertion of wedges into the cut, and the trees may be cut immediately above or below the ground. In the latter case the stump may be left safely in the soil. The motor which actuates the wire is placed outside of the range affected by the fall of the tree and when electricity is not already available it can be generated by a transportable power plant consisting of a ten-horse power petrol motor and dynamo, which are left at the entrance to the forest during the felling operations.

Still in Suspense.

Private Donahue and Private Leahy were the best of friends, but when Private Donahue became Sergt. Donahue, Private Leahy saw the failings of his former companion with amazing clearness.

"Sergeant," he said one day, after long, fixed gazing at his superior in rank, "if a private stepped up to a sergeant and called him a consated little monkey, phwat wud happen?"

"He'd be put in the gyard-house," said the sergeant.

"He wud?"

"He wud."

"But if the private only knew the sergeant was a consated little monkey, and said niver a wurrd, wud he be put in the gyard-house for that?" inquired Private Leahy.

"Av coorse he wud not," said the sergeant, loftily.

"Well, thin, for the present we'll have it go at that," said Private Leahy.

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The House-Boat Boys;

Or, FLOATING DOWN TO DIXIE

By St. George Rathborne

[Copyrigt 1911 by W. D. Boyce Co.]

CHAPTER I.

"I SAY, what's gone wrong now, Maurice, old fel?" and the speaker, a roughly clad boy of about fifteen or over, caught hold of his companion's sleeve and looked sympathetically in his face.

The lad whom he called Maurice was better dressed, and he seemed to carry with him a certain air of refinement that was lacking in his friend, who was of a rougher nature; but despite this difference he and Thad Tucker were the closest of chums, sharing each other's joys and disappointments, small though they might be.

They had met just now at the post-office of a little country town not many miles below Evansville, Indiana, as the afternoon mail was being sorted.

The yellow flood of the great Ohio river could be seen from where they stood, glowing in the early November sunshine.

At being greeted with these words Maurice Pemberton shook his head dolefully.

"It's come, just as I've been half expecting it these four months, Thad. The old couple I live with have sold their house and leave for Chicago in a week. That turns me out into the streets, for you know they've given me a home ever since mother, who was a friend of Mrs. Jasper, died; and in return I've tried to make good by doing all their gardening and other work between school hours. Now a son has sent for them to come and make their home with him. Pretty tough on a fellow not to know where he's going to sleep after a single week."

But Thad was smiling now, as though an idea had flashed into his head that gave him reason for something akin to pleasure.

"Well, I don't know; if it comes to the worst, Pard Maurice, you're a dozen times welcome to share my old bunky on the boat. I'd just love to make another cot like mine, and have you there. Say, wouldn't it be grand? Of course, though, you'd find it a pretty poor contraption alongside the house you've lived in, but if it was a thousand dollar launch still you'd be just as welcome, and you know it," he said with a heartiness that could not be misunderstood.

The other looked at him affectionately, and was about to say something in return when the window of the postoffice was thrown open as a signal that the mail had been distributed; so Maurice stepped up to secure the usual papers together with an occasional letter that came for the Jaspers.

Thad saw him start and look curiously at one letter, and then begin to tear the end off as though it were meant for him; watching curiously, all unaware how history was making at that identical moment for himself and Maurice, he saw the other smile and nod his head, while an expression of delight gradually crept over his face.

Then Maurice remembered that his chum was standing there waiting for him to come, and together they passed out of the little office.

"If that doesn't beat the Dutch," Maurice was saying, half to himself, as he looked at the letter he was holding in a hand that trembled a little despite his efforts to seem composed.

"It cert does," declared Thad, positively; and then both laughed.

"Excuse me, old fellow, for not speaking up and letting you into the facts; but you can see for yourself that the thing's kind of staggering me a bit. Just to think of its coming today of all times, when I'm most in need of a home. Talk to me about chance; I guess there's something better than accident about this."

"All right; I agree with you, Pard Maurice; but suppose you let a little light in on my dumb brain. Where's the letter from, and what does she say?" observed the other, eyeing the envelope dubiously, for he had a sudden fear that it meant the sundering of the ties that bound them together.

"New Orleans, and it comes from Uncle Ambrose—you've often heard me speak of him, and that he was a captain on a tramp steamer that went all over the world picking up cargoes. For three years I've lost track of him, but he hasn't quite forgotten his nephew Maurice it seems. Listen to what he says, after telling me how he's beginning to feel lonely without a relative near, and growing old all the time. 'Sit down here where we can look out on the bully old river, while I read.'

Thad dropped beside him on a stone, and cuddled his arms around his knees in a favorite attitude of his, while he prepared to listen.

"'We are billed to be back here in New Orleans about the fifteenth of February, and if you can make it, my boy, I'd like to see you here then. I've got a berth as supercargo open to you, and there's a fine chance to see something of the world; for in the course of three years we are apt to visit the seven seas and many strange countries. Be sure and

"I'd be mighty careful, you, there!"

come if you care to take up with your old uncle. The older I grow the stronger the ties that bind to the past appeal to me, and it will make me happier to have one of my own blood aboard to share my travels. From your affectionate uncle. AMBROSE HADDON.

"On board the 'Campertown.'"

"Bully! That's just fine for you, Maurice; but don't you think the captain forgot one thing?" declared Thad.

"What's that?" asked his friend, looking puzzled.

"Why didn't he think to enclose the price of a ticket from here to New Orleans? He might have known money don't grow on bushes around here."

Maurice laughed.

"I always heard Uncle Ambrose was forgetful of small things, and I guess it's true. Never once entered his head when he was writing. Perhaps it may later, and he'll think to enclose the money from some foreign port. Why, would you believe it, he didn't even mention where the steamer was going to next; only remarked that they sailed in a day or so. But the tone of the letter is warm, and—why, of course I must accept the invitation. It just seems to come in now at the one time I need it most. You wouldn't want me to let it pass, would you, Thad?"

"I should say not, even if it does hurt some to think of you going away and me staying in this bum old place," said his friend, quickly giving Maurice an affectionate look that spoke volumes.

"If you could only go too. I'm dead sure uncle would be glad to have you with me on board; and think of the glorious times we could have. Why, it seems too good to be true, doesn't it?"

"I guess it does—for me. I'd like to go the worst kind, but where would I pick up the money to pay my way? Of course I might float down the Mississippi on the tramp all right, given time enough; but that would be kind of lonely business for one; now if you could only—say, I wonder—oh, bosh, of course you wouldn't want to even think of it," and he dropped his head dejectedly.

"Wouldn't think of what? Why don't you go on and finish? You've got some sort of a scheme in your head, so explain," demanded Maurice, quickly.

"I was just thinking, that's all, what a great time we might have if we did start out in my little bum boat to make New Orleans. There's three months ahead of us, and scores of shanty boats float down from Cincinnati to Orleans every fall and winter—you know that. do it, Thad?" he exclaimed.

"Do I? Why, it would be as easy as pie. Think of it; all you have to do is to let the current carry you along. It's a snap, that's what!" cried the other, brimming over with enthusiasm.

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Ah! Thad was yet to learn that a thousand unforseen difficulties lay in wait for those floating craft that drifted down the great water highway every winter; but "in the bright lexicon of youth there is no such word as fail," and to his eyes the enterprise was a veritable voyage of pleasure, nothing less.

"Then we'll go!" declared Maurice, with vim, shaking his chum's hand furiously. "Given a week to get my traps together, sell what I don't want, lay in some provisions, buy a few things, like a flannel shirt and corduroy trousers after the style of those you wear, and I'll be ready. Say, Thad, what a day this has turned out after all, and I was just thinking it the blackest ever."

"It's made me mighty happy, I know," asserted Thad, with tears in his honest blue eyes; "for I'd just hated to lose you, old boy, sure I would."

"Just to think of our launching on that great old river and starting for such a long voyage—it's immense, that's what. I've always wanted to see something of the old Mississippi and to think that the chance has come. Why, it's like magic, that's what. A flip of the hand and everything is changed. The opening of Uncle Ambrose's letter must have been the turning point in my life—our lives, Thad. Oh, I am so glad I hardly know what to do."

"Pitto here. On my part I'll put the week in tinkering on the old barge, for she can stand some improvement, I guess. When that fisherman gave her to me on going to the hospital, from which the poor fellow never came back, he said he always intended dropping down the river to the gulf in her; but I never dreamed I'd be the one to navigate the Tramp that way. I can hardly wait to get back. I want to be at work making those changes, and building your bunk. How lucky it is you've got a gun, Maurice, for there will be lots of chances while we travel down stream to pick up a mess of ducks, some snipe, and perhaps a big goose or two, for Bob Fletcher told me he had shot 'em off the bars down the Mississippi. And if our supplies and money run out, why, we can sure stop in some place and get work, I reckon. Then there's fish to be had for the catching, and you know I'm up to all the wrinkles about that job, seeing that I've been supplying many families here with the finnies during the summer and fall. Say, can you come down tonight and talk it all over aboard our palatial houseboat? We can arrange all the things we want to do, make out a list of supplies that are sure to be needed, no flimsies or luxuries allowed, and in the morning I'll get to work."

"Of course I'll come, after supper. Still in the old cove, are you?"

"Yes. I've got a stout lock on the door now, and every time I leave the shanty I drag my little canoe, as I call it, into the house. If I didn't some thief would run off with it sure. They're a tough crowd around here, the boys I mean. Wonder if we'll run up against many as bad when we journey along?" remarked Thad; and in good time he would learn that the Ohio and Mississippi rivers constitute what might easily be termed the "Rogues' Highway," since hundreds of tough characters make use of the current in order to slip from one borough that has grown too hot for their comfort to another where they are not known.

But perhaps it is just as well that we do not see the difficulties that lie in our path, lest they daunt us by their multitude; coming one at a time we are enabled to wrestle with the trials and tribulations, and overcome them gradually.

Filled with enthusiasm the two lads plunged into the task they had laid out, and long ere the seven days had expired were ready for the voyage over unknown waters; the little shantyboat had been thoroughly repaired, and changes in her interior made, looking to the comfort of the crew, and all supplies brought aboard that the limited means of the boys would allow; so that on the tenth of November all was in readiness for the launching.

CHAPTER II.

It was a frosty morning, but something more than that would be needed to dampen the enthusiasm and ardor of the two lads who pushed out from the river bank where a little creek flowed into the Ohio's flood, and started upon what was to be a momentuous voyage.

Several of Maurice's boy friends were on hand to wish them the best of luck, and with the cheers of these fellows ringing in their ears they moved out upon the swift current of the river.

When the group of boys had vanished and the cruisers found themselves beyond the confines of the town they had called home for some years, all attention was given to "Pitto" the boy.

The boat had been urged out into the stream by a dextrous use of the sweep made for that purpose, and which, with the exception of a couple of long poles, was the only method aboard for steering the craft; and as it was not their design to get too far away from shore until they were better versed in the navigable qualities of the Tramp, the boys sat in comfortable positions and talked, watching the panorama as they "drifted" along.

Indeed, there always is something fascinating about such a method of travel that must appeal to almost any boy; for in spite of the uplifting tendencies of education, and the refining influences of homes, there remains in the hearts of most lads, and men as well, a peculiar longing for a spell of tramp existence—it is satisfied after a short period in the open and the wilds, when the comforts of home appeal just as strongly to the exile.

No doubt this yearning for getting close to the heart of Nature is an inherited trait, coming down to us from our remote ancestors, and will never be wholly eradicated from our systems.

And these two lads could enjoy it to the full, for neither of them had known the delights of a real home for many years—in fact Thad, never.

They made many plans while sitting there, and as time passed and new views were constantly opening before them, both seemed agreed that it had been an inspiration that had caused Thad to suggest this voyage, with the far-away Crescent City as their goal.

Thad had, indeed, done fairly creditable work in fixing up the interior of the house upon the float; there were a couple of bunks that in the daytime could be raised so that they became flat against the wall, and out of the way, since room was at a premium inside the shanty, with a cook stove, a table, a trunk and various other things filling space.

From numerous hooks in a couple of corners their clothes hung; then about the little stove, which was to give them warmth and furnish the heat to cook their meals, several frying pans and tin kettles hung, while a tea kettle sung a soft song of contentment that seemed to fit in with the spirit possessing the two cruisers.

A supply of firewood occupied a box arranged for its accommodation, and there was considerable more of the same outside; while a new axe gave promise of any needed amount, dependent only upon willing muscles and an ability to swing the same freely.

There was the gun Thad had mentioned, hanging from a couple of nails—true, it might not be called a beauty, for it was an old type Marlin and much battered by service, but then Maurice had on many occasions proved its shooting qualities, and that, after all, is the true test of a firearm. It was a double-barrel twelve bore, capable of knocking down, even a big goose, provided the right charge was in the shell, and the eye that glanced along the tubes knew its business and could hold on the moving game.

At noon they were passing Henderson, Ky., and changing their course to the west, for the river makes a tremendous sweep before getting anywhere near Mt. Vernon, forming a gigantic horseshoe as it were, the last part of the turn bringing the voyager with his face into the northeast.

Throughout the whole livelong day the little shantyboat continued to sweep along with the current, which was something like four miles an hour at this point, though it exceeds that considerably when the river rises, or the wind comes out of the north and east.

About 4 o'clock they passed Mt. Vernon, for which both boys were glad, as they did not enjoy the thought of tying up on this, their first night afloat, close to a strange town, where they were apt to be pestered by curious visitors, and perhaps boys bent on pranks that might cost the travelers dear, since some of these fellows would not think anything of setting fire to a boat, and laugh to watch the frantic efforts of the owners to extinguish the flames.

When the dusk was beginning to gath-

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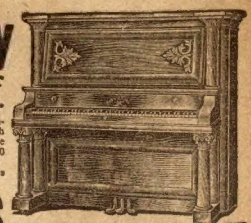

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er on the moving waters, Thad spied what seemed to be the mouth of a good-sized creek below, and as they were just then skirting the shore with the intention of pulling in at the first chance, it was not much of an effort to turn the boat so that they could pole into the mouth of the stream and go up it some distance.

Thad's steering oar seemed to work to a charm, and he was more than a little pleased with his work in that direction; for much of the pleasure of the long voyage was apt to depend upon the ability with which they could guide their clumsy craft when an emergency arose.

Fortunately the creek seemed quite deserted; they had feared lest some other boat like their own might have preempted the claim, and the owners endeavor to make it disagreeable for them; not that either of the boys felt timid, for they were both built along the line of fighters, and ready to hold their own with any chap of their size, or larger; but until they became used to this strange method of living they would rather not run into any trouble if it could be decently avoided.

Once the boat was secured to a tree ashore, they began to get busy with preparations for supper.

While floating down stream Thad, who was a born fisherman and always looking for a chance to snatch a mess of the finny tribe out of the water, had kept a couple of baited lines dangling behind; and during the afternoon several bites had resulted in a couple of captures, both being of an edible variety, known along the Ohio as buffalo fish, the two weighing possibly four pounds.

Thus they were supplied with the substantial end of a meal without the cost of a penny. Thad had cleaned the fish as fast as caught, so that all they had to do now was to slap them on the frying pan, after a bit of salt pork had been allowed to simmer, salt and pepper to taste, and then turn when necessary.

Meanwhile Maurice had made a pot of coffee and set the table.

A cloth would have been the height of absurdity on such a trip as this. Maurice had settled that part of the business by tacking white oilcloth over their single table, and this answered the purpose admirably, besides being easily kept clean.

"Ain't it great, Captain?" asked Thad, as they sat there enjoying the meal by the light of the two lanterns hanging from hooks in the rafters of the cabin roof.

Thad had insisted that Maurice be the skipper of the expedition, because of his superior knowledge of boats in general, and also his possessing the chart of the rivers; for himself he wanted to be called the Cook, and declared that he felt proud of his ability to fling flapjacks and do various stunts in connection with getting up appetizing meals.

Nevertheless, it might be noticed that just as frequently the Captain insisted on taking his turn at the fire or washing the tin dishes after the meal; while the Cook was able and willing to stand his "trick at the wheel" when the occasion arose. This was, of course, stretching the imagination pretty far, since their only means of propulsion or steering rested in that sweep.

Maurice admitted that it was indeed delightful, and the look on his face quite satisfied the anxious Thad that as yet he could not see the slightest cloud on the horizon to make him regret starting.

For bread they had brought several loaves along; neither of them had the nerve to think of baking the staff of life in that disreputable oven, even had they known how; but later on Maurice did turn out some "pretty fair" biscuit—that is, the boys thought them good, and they were the ones to say, since it was their appetites that had to be satisfied, not those of some finicky girl who might have turned up her nose in horror at the "abominations" these lads called fine.

Thad smoked, while Maurice had never taken to the habit as yet; but he did not dislike the odor of tobacco, and hence his chum was not compelled to always enjoy the solace of his pipe outdoors in uncongenial weather, though as a rule he preferred to sit there by the rudder and puff away while his thoughts ran riot, as those of a boy usually will.

When the meal was over and the dishes washed, marking the close of their first day, the lights were extinguished and the boys sat outside for a short time; but with the gathering of night the air was growing colder again, so that they were soon glad to seek the shelter of the cabin.

Maurice made sure to draw the shades fully over the windows, for he did not wish to advertise the fact of their being in that cove to every passerby, since a road ran close to the water, for they had heard a wagon passing over a bridge not fifty feet away earlier in the evening.

One thing they had been wise in doing—while the little boat that trailed behind the larger craft could not be said to possess any particular pecuniary value, it was of considerable necessity to the travelers, and represented their only means of getting around in a hurry, or going ashore when the water was too shallow to admit of the flat reaching the bank; therefore, in order to prevent possible loss from some prank of mischievous boys or thieving negroes, Maurice had secured a long and stout chain, with a padlock, and at night this was so attached to the dinky that no one could sneak the stumpy little craft away without the use of a hatchet to chop out the staple; and while this was being done the owners of the Tramp would surely be getting extremely busy also with gun and axe.

"How does it go?" asked the carpenter of the expedition, as he saw Maurice settle down in his bunk and draw the blankets around him with the air of one who did not expect to be disturbed for a long spell.

"Hunky-dory. Beats my old bed at home by a long shot. There's no use talking, Thad, you're built for a carpenter, sure pop, and if there's any vacancy aboard the Campertown in that line I'm going to induce Uncle Ambrose to let you fill it. Douse the glim whenever you're ready, Cook. I hope I won't have to crawl out of this bully berth until morning," was the reply of the other, that brought a smile of satisfaction to Thad's face, for it always pleasant to know that one's labor is appreciated.

So Thad blew out the one lantern which they had been using since coming in the second time, and then crawled into his own bunk. As he had been occupying this for half a year or more of course he was very familiar with its features, both good and poor, and made no comment as he retired.

The two boys soon passed into the land of slumber, and as the hours drew on no sound arose to waken them; indeed, outside all was still save the gurgle of the great river near at hand, the swishing of running water against the sturdy bow of the shantyboat, a hoarse cry from some bird that fluttered along the shore looking for food, possibly a night heron passing over, and once or twice the hoarse whistle of some steamboat breasting the current of the mighty Ohio.

And the first night of their eventful cruise passed away, with everything well when the peep of dawn aroused them from slumber to a new day.

CHAPTER III.

"Hello, Maurice!"

The call came from Thad, who had been the first to step outdoors after getting into his clothes.

"What now?" came the muffled answer, for Maurice was pulling a sweater over his head at the moment.

"Come out here, will you. We're in a peck of trouble, I reckon," continued the voice from beyond the door; and accordingly Maurice made haste to leave the cabin.

He found Thad with a pole in his hand, shoving against the bank until he was as red as a turkey gobbler in the face.

"What's doing here—why all this scrimmage?" naturally sprang from the lips of the mystified one.

"Stuck fast—river taken a sudden notion to go down while we snoozed, and has left us on the mud. It don't seem able to budge the thing an inch; but perhaps the two of us might," returned Thad, grinning sheepishly as he contemplated the result of their indiscretion.

Maurice grasped the significance of the situation and looked grave.

The river, as he well knew, was always a freakish thing, and apt to rise or fall at any time, according to the amount of rainfall along its feeders.

Just now it had commenced to rapidly decline, and as a result the shantyboat had been grounded.

As it was a heavy affair, once let it fairly settle upon the ooze of the creek bed, and no power they could bring to bear would be sufficient to start it on its way; and hence they must stay there, marooned, until the river took a notion to rise again, which might be in a day, a week or three months.

That was a pleasant lookout for a couple of boys bound south, and with winter close upon their heels—in a week or two they might be frozen in so securely that there would be no possibility of release until spring.

No wonder, then, that Maurice looked serious as he sprang to the side of the boat and stared over at the water of the creek.

It was running out—they should have known of the danger upon hearing the gurgle during the night; but somehow, lacking experience, they had thought nothing of it save that the sound was a musical lullaby, soothing them to slumber.

They would know better another time, and not fasten their craft to the shore in a shallow creek when the river was at a stand or falling; it takes experience to learn some of the tricky ways of these western rivers; but once understood the lesson is not apt to be caught a second time.

Maurice snatched up the second pole and threw his weight upon it, while Thad also strained himself, to the utmost; they could feel the boat move ever so little, but it was most discouraging to be sure.

Some other means must be employed if they hoped to get the Tramp off the slimy bed before she settled there for good.

Maurice was equal to the occasion.

"The block and tackle does it!" he exclaimed, darting into the cabin.

What matterd it if the rope was second hand, and the block creaked for want of grease—that last was speedily rectified, and having fastened one end of the line to a tree on the opposite side of the creek, the boys secured a purchase and then exerted themselves to the utmost.

It was a success, for now they had a firm foundation, whereas with the poles it was partly a case of lost force, the soft nature of the ground preventing them from doing their best.

Impulsive Thad gave a cheer when the boat began to move in response to their united endeavor, and presently glided off her slippery bed into the deeper channel of the creek.

"A close shave," declared Maurice, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, and surveying the late resting place of the shantyboat with satisfaction.

"I should remark," echoed his chum, dancing a hornpipe on the deck; "just think what if we had been stuck here a week or two; all our grub gone, and the dickens to pay with our plans. Never again, for me. I'm going to be the most careful chap when it comes to tying up to a bank with this craft you ever saw."

"I'll get the line loose while you start up the fire. Then we'll push out of here and cook breakfast while we float down stream. Every mile made now may save us trouble later; for you know what old Pap Larkin told us about sudden freezes coming sometimes in November, and we want to get in the big river before we strike anything like that."

In less than ten minutes they were moving out of the mouth of the creek, with the river, half wreathed in fog, lying before them.

"We'll have to keep a good lookout, unless we want to run a chance of cutting down some river steamer coming up stream," laughed Thad.

"Oh, that's easily avoided by keeping close in by the shore until this mist rises, which I calculate it will do by 9 o'clock or so," replied Maurice, using his pole to advantage, so as to send the boat out upon the current of the river, where they were speedily moving merrily along.

It was a delight to cook breakfast with such surrounding and a constantly changing panorama along the shore; never did bacon have such a delicious odor, and when the coffee boiled up, sending its fragrance throughout the cabin and out of the partly open door, Maurice, who was attending to the steering part of the business at the time, loudly bewailed the fact that he must wait five long minutes more ere satisfying the craving appetite that these suggestions of breakfast put on edge.

While they were still eating they passed a town on the Kentucky side that from the map they believed to be Uniontown, which proved that they were making fair progress while sitting around—which is one of the finest things in connection with drifting south; as Maurice said it reminded him of a garden that grew while the proprietor slept; for they could count on so many miles a day with ordinary good luck, and not a hand put out to urge the craft along.

While both these boys had spent much of their lives upon the banks of the Ohio, and were accustomed to the various sights familiar to all river dwellers, at the same time things had a vastly different appearance now that they were afloat and actually drawing nearer and nearer to the sunny southland with each passing hour.

They were in good spirits all the time, and hailed other voyagers with the customary salutations of the occasion.

It became no unusual thing to see one or two flatboats with cabins something like their own either drifting lazily along the stream or tied up close to the bank; for, as has been said before, the river is a muchly traveled highway, and the types of people that make use of it in their annual pilgrimages south must prove of tremendous interest to any one fond of studying humanity.

It was a banner day for the travelers, clear and fairly pleasant, one that in the rougher times ahead would always be looked back to as a period to be envied.

They made great progress, too, and when the afternoon sun waning in the

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west warned them that it was time to keep their eyes about for a decent place in which to pass the night. Maurice calculated that they had come all of forty miles since morning, which was making quite a gap in the distance separating them from the junction of the two rivers.

The air was growing colder, and Thad, who professed to be something of a weather sharp, declared that they were in for a touch of winter very speedily, which made them both long to get out of the clutches of the Ohio before ice formed and impeded their progress.

Maurice scouted any chance of this happening; it might have been more serious had they been cruising in a small boat which must find a safe harbor every night in some creek; because it might grow cold enough to freeze such a craft in some night, or at least shut those harbors of refuge to entrance; but with such a big and staunch craft they could tie up to the shore and pay little attention to the in-rolling waves cast by the suction of passing steamboats.

This night they found a chance to secure the shantyboat to some rocks up on the bank, and as the neighborhood seemed lonely, they chose to go ashore and build a fire on the sandy stretch that ran under the shelving ban.

Just for a change they cooked supper ashore, too, for it would be seldom that this sort of an opportunity might come to them, and they felt that they ought to take advantage of it while it lasted.

Already had the wind shifted to the northwest, and it was cold enough to make them seek the leeward side of the fire while eating supper.

They had gone aboard to see about the fire, and Maurice was lying on a bed of dead grass and moss looking into the glowing depths of the fire and allowing his thoughts to go out to the wonderful possibilities of the beckoning future, with Uncle Ambrose as the good fairy who was to lead him into strange lands that he had always wanted to see, when a bit of turf falling upon his arm caused him to suddenly glance upward.

To his surprise and a little to his consternation he beheld three black faces surveying him from over the edge of the bank; nor did he fancy the expression that could be seen upon the said countenances.

Upon seeing that their presence was no longer unknown to the boy below the trio of darkies dropped over the bank.

Closer inspection failed to add to the good opinion of Maurice, for the fellows bore all the earmarks of desperadoes, possibly belonging to that class of nomads who prowl along the shores of these western rivers, picking up a living by doing odd jobs, and stealing whenever they think it can be done with safety.

"Hello! boss, done takin' it easy I spects. Got any 'jections ter weuns warmin' up a little by dat fiah? Gittin' powful cold, boss, an' it jes' happens we ain't got nary a match in our clo's, dat's a fack," said the leader, advancing eagerly and holding out his hands toward the blaze.

"Why, of course not, boys. Make yourselves at home. I was just going aboard any way, and the fire's yours," remarked Maurice, rising.

He saw the three roughs look quickly toward each other, and noted that one of them had slipped between him and the boat, as though it might be their intention to prevent his leaving.

It was evident that there was trouble brewing, and unless it was nipped in the bud something of a fight would take place.

That they would stand no show whatever in the hands of these rascals, alone as they were in this isolated place, Maurice knew full well, but he would not allow himself to show any sign of fear lest in this way he precipitate the trouble.

Perhaps these men had been watching them for some time, and knew there were only a couple of boys on the shanty-boat, so that it would be useless to call out as if several husky men constituted the crew.

Maurice did not wish to come within arms' length of the negro who had slipped between himself and the boat, lest the fellow seize upon him, so that he was in a quandary how to act in order to gain his haven of refuge.

The puzzle was solved in a way he had not anticipated, for just as the wicked looking black tramp was putting out his hand to grasp him, as he pulled back, a voice broke upon the silence, the voice of his comrade Thad, saying:

"I'd be mighty careful how I laid a hand on that boy, you there!"

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this rattling boys' story. They have great times. Read it to the end and see. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

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JIMMY.

Jimmy's life at home was not exciting,
He was bored until he couldn't stand it.
So he thought he'd take up Indian fighting
And, for practice, first become a bandit.
Jimmy lay in wait for rustling cattails,
in his hand his trusty bowie-knife;
Clutched it tight and told himself, "If that fails,
I'll not give a penny for my life."
Jimmy massacred the honeysuckles;
Drank their blood and stole their yellow gold;
Met their cries with snickers and with chuckles.
Heartless bandit, bloodthirsty and bold!
This career of Jimmy's, dark and dire,
Ended like all other lives of crime.
Jimmy tried his strength against a brier,
That's the end of Jimmy and this rhyme.

Man—Who is the responsible person in this firm?

Office Boy—I'm the one who gets all the blame.

Spotted Horse.

On George's fifth birthday his grandfather gave him a wooden horse—a lovely horse, white with blue spots, and harnessed in red. Joe, George's little brother, was only three, and so he was not allowed to ride this fiery steed by himself. Instead, his grandfather set him astride his foot and gave him a fine ride there. But Joe turned wistful eyes toward his stalwart brother and the wooden horse. How it rocked! Its mane and tail waved in the breeze, and it fairly seemed to be alive.

George rode the horse all the morning, and the horse was good and faithful and kept on going although it grew very tired. But George did not grow tired; on the contrary, the faster he went, the faster he wanted to go. At last, finding the horse was going more slowly, he dismounted, and, running into the yard, he game back with a long switch. Armed with this he mounted and started again, but the horse was tired and did not go so fast as George wanted. George struck it with the whip.

At that a remarkable thing happened. That good, faithful wooden horse grew so angry and indignant that, taking the bit between his teeth, he bolted out the front door, tumbling his rider on the floor.

"My goodness gracious me!" exclaimed George. "My wooden horse has run away. Did you ever hear of such a thing?"

But Joe, who was only three, had not yet had time to hear of much of anything, and so he could offer no suggestions.

"Horse all gone," he said, sadly.

"I'm going to find him and bring him back. You can come, too, if you want," announced George.

Only too eager at the idea of such an adventure, Joe scrambled to his feet and put his hand in his big brother's. Together they set out to bring back the runaway.

They ran down the stairs and out at the front door. Looking down the road, they saw their horse merrily rocking along, a short distance ahead.

"We shall soon catch him. He is not going very fast," cried George, as they started confidently in pursuit.

But no sooner did the horse see them coming than he kicked up his rockers and made off down the road at a great rate.

George and Joe ran until they were out of breath and they had to sit down by the roadside to rest. But as soon as the horse saw that they were resting, he proceeded to rest, too, so that the boys were encouraged to take up the chase again when they got their breath. The horse enjoyed it tremendously. He even turned and came back when he saw the boys were too out of breath to catch him, and he rocked merrily about, just beyond their reach, only to start again at full speed when they made an effort to catch him.

At last, after he had done this many times, the boys began to get discouraged.

"Oh, dear, I don't believe we will ever catch him," said George.

Just then along came a man in cart, whereat George was fired with an idea.

"Please may we get in your cart?" he said. "We want to catch my birthday horse that has run away."

"Why, certainly. Jump right in," said the man.

So in the brothers scrambled and lay down in the bottom of the wagon so that the horse should not see them.

By this means they got so close to the runaway that the man was able to call out to him:

"Hello, horse! Where are you going?"

"I'm running away," replied the horse cheerfully.

"Well, I think you've run away long enough. Suppose you run home again."

"I don't want to," replied the horse.

But before he had time to say any more, the man had reached out of the wagon and caught him by the bridle.

He made the runaway fast to the back of the wagon and then took the boys home.

The spotted horse never ran away again, but that was only because he never got a chance.

The Secret Chamber.

Ever hear of Dick Turpin? All the English boys and girls know about him. He used to be a highwayman, but he is dead now. He has been dead for nearly 200 years, and he is not robbing travelers any more. When he was in business for himself he used to make his headquarters at an inn at Newbury, not far from old London. The legend says that there was a secret chamber in the inn, and that no one could find the door without being shown where it was. That is where Dick Turpin used to hide.

After Dick left the highways forever and had no more need of the room some one murdered another person in it, and that was of course decidedly wrong. But the murder was done and could not be undone, though the people in the inn wished it might be undone after the ghost made his appearance. It was not a nice ghost. It was supposed to be the spirit of the man that had been murdered, and it haunted the secret room. Well, the people at the inn did not like to have a ghost around, but they thought that it would do no harm if no one could see it, and so they bricked up the door of the secret room and let the ghost stay there as a permanent tenant. It seems that the ghost was satisfied. At least, no one ever heard of him again, and after a time there remained no one that knew where the room was. Its place had been forgotten. Many people said that it had never existed.

It had been forgotten for a century and more when the other day the old building was undergoing repairs, and the workmen, who were tearing down the wall of a passageway, broke into the haunted chamber. They did not find anything there. They did not find even the ghost, and so the people that own the house now have decided that they will take down the wall and use the space as part of a larger room. That will surely confuse the ghost if he comes back to haunt.

They Awoke.

Two thoughtless women found a wasps' nest in the woods in Massachusetts and took it to the house near by where a New York artist lives. The artist hung the nest over the fireplace. Soon afterward he went outdoors, but looked in again when he heard a queer humming noise. There was nothing at all wrong, except that the fire had thawed out the wasps and the room was full of them. The artist went around to the windows—from the outside—and opened them, and after several hours the room became so cold that the wasps went to bed again. Did the artist let the nest stay where it had been put? You may have three guesss. And did he paint a picture of himself and of the wasps that he had hung over the fire, and did he go put the picture on exhibition? You may not have three guesses for that. One is enough.

Holiday Wanted.

Mamma—So you want to give your dear teacher a present.

Tommy—Yes, ma. I'd like to give her some of that candy like I had the other day.

Mamma—Why, Tommy, that was what made you so ill.

Tommy—Yes, ma. I know it was.

THE BABY.

I named the baby Buffalo Bill, which I thought very fine;
But a minister came in a long white dress and named her Clementine.

GOOD-BY.

A mouse went into the barn one day
Where pussie cat slept on a load of hay.
But puss waked up and yawned, "Oh, dear!"
So mousie remarked, "'Tis very clear
I'd better away to avoid a row
Betwixt myself and Mrs. Meow,
For neither here nor across the sea
Is a big enough barn for pussie and me."
So while pussie blinked on the load of hay
The mousie winked and ran away.

Tot Wit.

Sunday School Teacher—Now, Jeannette, can you tell me what faith is?

Small Jeannette—Yes, ma'am; it's believing what you know isn't so.

"Nettie," said her mother, "don't you want a hard boiled egg for lunch?"

"I'd like to have one, mamma," replied Nettie, "if you've got time to undress it for me."

A gentleman had just rescued a little fellow who had fallen into the river.

"I'm awfully glad you got me out," said the youngster. "Mother would have given me a lickin' if I had got drowned."

At the beginning of Lent a small Austin miss was asked what she was going to deny herself during the Lenten season.

"Well," she replied, "I can't give up candy, 'cause Lent's too long and candy's too good. I guess I'll give up cabbage—I don't like cabbage, anyway."

Small Elmer, who had just received a severe scolding, said: "Am I really so bad, mamma?"

"Yes, Elmer," she replied. "You have been a very, very bad boy."

"Well," rejoined the youngster after a moment's reflection, "you ought to be thankful that I ain't twins."

At the Bottom of the Well.

Over the bridge of Avignon (which is pronounced somewhat like Aveen-yaw, only not quite so much so) they are looking for thirteen golden statues that have been missing for centuries. The pope threw them down a well, and they are supposed to have remained buried. There was a time when there were two series of popes. One lived in Rome and the other Avignon, which is an ancient city in southern France. At last the Avignon pope was deposed and fled from the city, but before he left, tradition tells, he threw some of his heaviest treasures down a well. The legend has lasted 500 years, and now the people at Avignon are looking for the treasure again.

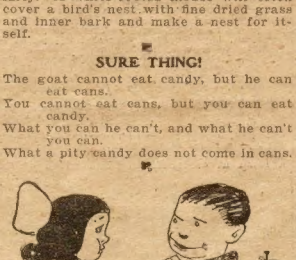
Avignon, by the way, is a queer old place. It has the remnant of an old bridge, about which the children of all France sing a song like the "London Bridge" song that we know in this country and in England.

A Storehouse.

In the old birds' nests that are placed near the ground in shrubs and small trees close to hazel-nut bushes and bittersweet vines in the country you will often find a handful of hazel-nuts or bittersweet berries. They were put there by the white-footed mice and the meadow mice that visit these storehouses regularly. A white-footed mouse will often cover a bird's nest with fine dried grass and inner bark and make a nest for itself.

SURE THING!

The goat cannot eat candy, but he can eat cans.
You cannot eat cans, but you can eat candy.
What you can he can't, and what he can't you can.
What a pity candy does not come in cans.



Little Sister—Teacher says there is a still, small voice that tells when we've done wrong?

Little Jimmie—Aw, I bet it's yours. You're always tattlin' on me.

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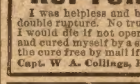

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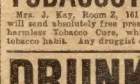

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